# THE PILGRIMAGE OF OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOUR

The Chapel of Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

THE

# PILGRIMAGE

OF

# OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

BY

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# INTRODUCTION.

*"For, behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed."—St. Luke: 1, 48.*

This wonderful prophecy of the Blessed Mother of God has been fulfilled in the Christian ages of the past, and will continue to be realized till time shall be no more.

Those departed generations have in various ways done their part in carrying out her prediction. Their teachings, and preachings, and writings, and arts, and sciences, have called her blessed; their councils and religious orders, and confraternities, and sodalities, and various institutions, have called her blessed; their many and magnificent modes of worship, their churches and festivals and pilgrimages, have called her blessed.

Her pilgrimages, of which alone there is

question at present, gird the circling earth with their marvels of grace and glory of ritual.

No Catholic people but has them. Now, just as Faith has called them into existence in other lands, so has it created one here in our own midst—that of Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

Pilgrimages seem to answer a need of the human heart. There is a mysterious attraction about certain places that have, so to say, acted a role in human history, whose name or fame, for better or for worse, is intimately associated with the life of the race.

Thus, man will go to visit and contemplate with a strange pleasure the battlefield where sleep the ashes of his country's dead; or will go to gaze with awe on the scene that recalls some great civic revolution; or, in fine, under the same strange spell, will go to pay the homage of reverence at the tomb of departed worth, be it that of a Shakespeare or of a Washington.

If men, in general, are thus led by the voice of nature to satisfy a mysterious yearning by

contact with persons or things that awaken their admiration or appeal to the feelings of their heart, how much more should the Christian, under the impulse of faith, be moved to satisfy his pious longings at those spots hallowed by sacred memories, or appointed by Heaven, like the sanuctuaries of old, to offer refuge where all, especially the guilty, may find grace and salvation.

The idea, then, of the religious pilgrimage, has its origin in nature. Hence, it is that all religions, true or false, have their sacred resorts, to which the faithful throng, especially at certain seasons.

Nor does this idea of pilgrimage limit or question divine omnipotence and divine omnipresence, which are everywhere. It only holds that God's infinite goodness may and does show itself in some circumstances more than in others. Hence, of old, obeying a law of his religion, every Jew went as pilgrim to the festivals that took place in the Holy City. And thus, in obed-

ence to another law—the law of love—the followers of Christ, from the dawn of Christianity on, went in endless streams to visit the holy places of Palestine, where the God-Man had deigned to live and die for us.

And when, in the course of ages, the unbelieving Turk challenged this pious custom, the holy wars, or Crusades, were the answer of Christendom. Such was the unparalleled act of faith of the Christian world in the Christian pilgrimage.

The word "pilgrimage" may mean either the visit paid to a sacred shrine, and, hence, the beautiful prayers of the Ritual to suit that purpose; or it may mean, and with us will mean throughout this little work, the sacred shrine itself. As to the determining cause that decides men to carry out this holy enterprise of visiting sacred shrines, it may be one or it may be manifold. But, whether the motive be to draw nearer to God, or to accomplish a vow, or to perform a penance, or to obtain a grace, the prin-

ciple changes not, but remains intact and sacred. And, therefore, Holy Church has ever sanctioned pilgrimages. Hence, the great number of them—a number all the greater where faith is greater.

Hence, the uncounted shrines that dot the Catholic lands of Europe—the sunlit plains of Italy, the stormy mountainsides of Switzerland, the beautiful land of France, the vales of Holy Ireland, the sacred soil of martyred Poland, the plains of ancient Belgium, the historic hills and dales of Portugal, the vineclad slopes of sunny Spain, the storied realms of Austria and Germany. A day was, too, when England was Mary's dowry, and from sea to sea, and from year's end to year's end, her pilgrim shrines were crowded.

Each of all these uncounted shrines has its own peculiar story, that invariably tells of some uncommon manifestation of the goodness of God, or of His saints. Now, of all these saints, there is one, the Queen of them all, who is ever bent

on carrying out the mission assigned her on Calvary, to be the mother of men; that is, their protectress, their advocate, their refuge.

What wonder, then, that her shrines are scattered over the face of the earth, wherever her exiled children are in peril, wherever souls need saving? What wonder that she has placed one here? Fortunate New Orleans, that possesses a pilgrim shrine of Mary! Fortunate, since it is, at once, a mark and warrant of her predilection. And on the spot that she loves are sure to descend heaven's best graces, favors, blessings.

In the history of the Pilgrimage of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, and in the development of devotion to her under this title, are to be observed the same slow, silent, gradual rise and progress in the shadow of the cloister that recall the story of so many another Catholic devotion. This is the way with grace. It makes no noise, needs no advertisement, requires no flourish of trumpets. Like the Master, it simply goes about doing good. And from it, as from the

Master, there goes out a virtue that makes the blind to see, the lame to walk and the dead to rise from their graves. In its conduct it reminds us of the silent entry into His own world of the Author of Grace.

Wonderful, indeed, are the ways of God! And again: "When," says a pious writer, "God, ever bent on the salvation of men, wishes to accomplish some high purpose, He chooses and predestines a man and a place; a man to act and a place for the scene of his action. Thus, He chooses Adam and Eden, Abraham and Palestine, Moses and Sinai, David and Sion, St. Peter and Rome, St. Anthony and the Thebaid, St. Benedict and Monte Cassino, St. Francis of Assisium and the mountains of Umbria."

A person and a place—only these. Divine power does the rest! What is true of God's action in matters of vast importance seems to be equally true of it, often, in affairs of less consequence where grace comes into play. And thus, in the creation of our Christian pilgrim-

ages, there is generally on the part of God a like manner of proceeding.

Given the saintly Meinrad and a snowcapped mountain of Switzerland, and divine grace makes the world pilgrimage of Einsideln; given the little rustic maid Bernadette Soubirous and a hillside of the Pyrenees, and divine grace makes the marvelous shrine of Lourdes; given the poor Indian Diego and a mountain pass of Mexico, and divine grace makes the renowned pilgrimage of Guadalupe.

A mountain-top, a hillside, a mountain pass, and then the Apostle. One condition, an essential one to this apostleship, is that the instrument be, humanly speaking, helpless. God loves to choose the tool that is weakest, in order that triumph may be the more clearly his own. *Infirma mundi elegit Deus ut confundat fortia.*

The salvation of the world was wrought not through the life, but through the death, of Christ. And the reason? "In order that no flesh may glory in His sight." In the creation of this

pilgrimage of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, God selected as His apostle an humble religious; one not enriched with those extraordinary gifts, natural and supernatural, that speak to the imagination of men, or appeal to the popular heart, but one of those whose simple, mighty faith moves mountains, who relied entirely, utterly, on God to accomplish through her His purposes; in a word, an instrument according to His heart.

In the carrying out of His Divine program, therefore, she was a silent worker, satisfied to do what He willed, because He willed, and as He willed, knowing well that at His appointed hour, sooner or later, would come the triumph that crowns all His works at last.

## CHAPTER I.

### New Orleans—The Site of the Pilgrimage.

In the study of a supernatural fact, like that of the Pilgrimage of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, one of the first questions that naturally occur to the mind is: What cause can have brought it to this place? Why did Heaven choose to bless, in this particular manner, this particular spot? Were there uncommon circumstances in Louisiana that may have invited thither this extraordinary grace of God? We can, of course, never fathom the designs of Providence; nor can we, with any certainty, read in circumstances the reason of His acting. But we can, nevertheless, see causes that may have favored the selection of this rather than another place, and they all seem to be included in the one great fact that, for nearly one hundred years previous, the blessings of the Precious Blood were poured out in abundance upon this fortunate spot. From a supernatural, as from a natural, stand-

point, here was the city of destiny. Despite what reckless writers say of matters colonial, all was not evil here. Nor was there ever here so dark an hour that grace did not find freedom to act and the Divine Sower a willing soil—a condition of things that was not always realized elsewhere in the colonies.

The Church, indeed, was not without trials in this old Franco-Spanish dominion, and severe ones, not resulting, however, from ill-will of government, but from peculiar internal circumstances.

Fierce, indeed, was the strife between virtue and vice; but, at its worst, was it more so than in the world's civilized centers of to-day?

Especially was the struggle notable in the latter days of the eighteen century—that century of calamity that set in turmoil the whole world. Numbers of persons, fleeing from the terrors of revolution or injustice in other lands, sought a shelter on these friendly shores, not always for the betterment of the land itself.

Wanderers, too, in great numbers, in search of fortune, from north and south and east and west, drifted into this universal haven.

Still, though this strange influx multiplied opposition to the Church and rendered the work of grace more difficult, the Faith here did not succumb.

Official records show that, all in all, the little clergy of the vast colony, though out of all proportion to the work, toiled strenuously and fought valiantly the good fight.

Bad Catholics there were, and many—as there were everywhere else. But for them and for all, the sacramental streams of the Precious Blood flowed incessantly. The Church registers, as well as tradition, attest that the little ones were seasonably and generally all made children of God; that the Sacrament of Confirmation was frequently administered by visiting or resident bishops; that the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist went on uninterruptedly with their work of salvation; that the Adorable Sacrifice

never ceased to be offered; that the marriage rite was celebrated, nor was the burial rite omitted.

Aye, more, official public functions were generally, if not invariably, attended with religious pomp and ceremony. So that, traditionally and historically, this fair land of Louisiana is Christian, is Catholic.

Its profession of faith is known of all men. The revels of impiety in the mother country found some echo on these distant shores, but only to die out soon after.

Indeed, the mission of the devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Succor seems to have been partly to counteract this impious spirit. And in this, as in so many another need of the Church Militant, Mary was there to crush the serpent's head.

Divine grace was liberally dispensed to the little capital of the colony. Until the year 1763, when the Society of Jesus was suppressed in Louisiana, besides the parish church, there were,

at either end of the town, the chapel of the Jesuits and the chapel of the Ursulines, that, like two rural churches, were frequented by many from town and vicinity. At the Jesuit oratory there existed as early as 1738 a sodality for men, while at the Convent Chapel of St. Mary a like sodality, bearing the title of the "Immaculate Conception," was established for women in 1739 by a Bull of Pope Clement XII.

Thus, the only spot in this immense valley-empire of the Mississippi that, with all its drawbacks, religion might call its own, was New Orleans. Was it not in the fitness of things that here Mary should have her shrine—here on the banks of her own glorious river of the Immaculate Conception, that, through hills and plains, and mounts and vales of half a continent, wore and bore, in its silent flow to the sea, the name of the Queen of Heaven, and in its mute eloquence proclaimed the truth of the Immaculate Conception—here in the midst of that people upon whose souls and upon whose lives were

shed the benedictions of the Precious Blood?

And to what guardianship entrust the shrine if not to that of the Holy Order of St. Ursula? Through a strange century of startling vicissitudes, these devoted nuns had grandly held their own, and in every line of unselfish endeavor had wrought valiantly for the glory of God and the honor of His Mother. In the dark and appalling hour of epidemic, in the awful gloom of civil discord, in the supreme peril of foreign invasion, their pure prayers appealed to Heaven in behalf of their beloved country.

From the name and life of Mary they drew the inspiration that makes heroines. And what wonder, after all, that they did much for her, and she much for them?

In the constitutions of their order is there not imbedded the great duty of devotion to Mary? Hence, the most ambitious aim of every Ursuline nun is to be a worthy daughter of such a parent. If, now, it be permitted to compare blessings of a lower with those of a higher de-

gree, we may note that, just as it was in the designs of Heaven that the royal devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus should have as its apostle a nun of the Visitation Order, and should rise and flourish in the shadow of its cloister, so did Providence will that the devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Succor should have its origin within the sacred precincts of a monastery of St. Ursula, and should have as its first apostle a member of her Order.

These are the ways of Providence, past our comprehension, but always worthy of Him—all-wise, all-merciful, all-beautiful, all-admirable, all-divine. Places, like persons, He appoints to do His will, to give Him glory. And on them He bestows blessings to fit them for the destiny He assigns them. Is their mission a high one? Great will be their share of His treasures and of His love. Hence, comes it that our Crescent City is an object of His predilection. Hence, just as each one of a hundred other cities of the world has its memorable shrine, so has New Or-

leans its own—Our Lady of Prompt Succor—famous, too, in story, rich in graces and crowned with glory.

## CHAPTER II.

### The Mission of a Nun.

The following narrative relates the providential beginnings of the devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Succor, and in its plain, simple language enables us to see the hand of God drawing, as is His wont, glory from unexpected causes, and, as so often happens in the history of His Church, raising up in a supernatural order this new and beautiful creation out of nothingness. The story of the shrine of Our Lady of Prompt Succor has been often told, and sometimes incorrectly.

In order, then, to secure the greatest possible fidelity to truth and to furnish the highest authoritative recital of facts, we here reproduce, in brief form, the narrative of the beginning and foundation of the Pilgrimage, as found recorded in the archives of the Ursuline Convent in New Orleans.

At the breaking out of the great revolution in

France in 1792, all the religious in that country were forced to quit their houses. One of these, a nun of the Ursuline Order, whose family name was Frances Agatha Gensoul, and religious name Mme. St. Michel (a title that she will retain throughout this narrative), retired broken-hearted from her monastery to a home that, at the voice of grace, she had left only a few years before. This was in the little town of Pont St. Esprit, in the Department du Gard, in Southern France. When the revolutionary tempest had somewhat subsided, in 1802, she profited by the first calm to quit her solitude and open a boarding-school in Montpellier.

Her object in this was to help undo the religious desolation wrought in France by the revolution, and to carry out, as well as circumstances permitted, the aim of the Ursuline Order to which she still clung in spirit with all the force of a God-given vocation.

No longer did a house of the order exist in France. No longer did she have a hope of see-

ing her former community of Pont St. Esprit re-established. In vain had she endeavored to bring together once more the scattered remnants of that once magnificent company of chosen souls.

Age, suffering, exile, the guillotine, had done their work. And the splendid convent of other days was to be henceforth only a thing of the past, a memory. While thus she, on her side, saw the gloom of death settle upon all her once fond hopes, Mgr. Fournier, the Bishop of Montpellier, on the contrary, saw the germ of future triumphs in the large number of aspirants for the religious life, as well as in the brilliant success of the boarding-school which she had so energetically founded and managed with consummate skill.

Counting on her great qualities, natural and supernatural, he had already planned in his mind to call again into existence the Ursuline establishment that once so successfully trained the youth of his diocese, and flourished so bril-

liantly in his episcopal city, and to place her at its head as founder and superior.

Every motive, every consideration, seemed to point her out as the fittest, or, rather, the only, instrument to carry out his designs. Nor was it too much to hope that, this foundation being once solidly established, its branch houses would become so many sources of religious education for the other parts of the diocese.

This, then, thought he, would be the first great measure taken to undo the disasters of the past and to repair the religious ruins around him. Long and patiently had he matured his scheme of reparation, and, in his plan of reform, Mme. St. Michel was to become an indispensable factor.

However, man proposes and God disposes. At this time, Mme. St. Michel received a letter from a relative of hers, Mother St. André Madier, an Ursuline religious in New Orleans. This letter was to change the whole plan of her life. From its contents she learned that, owing to a polit-

ical revolution Louisiana, which fifty years before had been ceded by France to Spain, was lately restored by the latter to the former, and at last, and finally, ceded by France to the United States.

She also learned how sixteen members of the community, dreading the fatal consequences that might follow this frequent change of government, had withdrawn to the City of Havana, to found there a monastery under the rule of the King of Spain, of which most of them were natives. This left the remaining seven sisters almost in the impossibility of continuing the work confided to them. Unequal though they were to the struggle, they had succeeded in keeping up a boarding-shcool, a day-school, an orphanage and a regular course of instruction to negro slaves. But the task was exhausting, and it was not difficult to foresee the end, or to foretell the early day when the only house of the Ursuline Order within the limits of the republic would be no more.

Hence, the letter, and, hence, the appeal to Mme. St. Michel to come to the rescue. In the dilemma what was she to do? She was to do the will of God. Only that and nothing more. And that Sovereign Will was now gradually unfolding itself to her view and leading her on to the accomplishment of designs of which she then had no suspicion. The lifework appointed her was not in France, but in a land beyond the seas, under the sunny skies of Louisiana. The Queen of Heaven had a work for her to accomplish there—a great, a glorious, task. Would she answer the vocation? Mme. St. Michel, on reading the letter from Mother St. André Madier, experienced an ardent desire to yield at once to the appeal and to go to New Orleans.

Nor did days, nor did weeks, lessen the effect of the letter upon her mind. The appeal was certainly, by its very nature, a powerful one—one that spoke at once to her zeal, to her pity, to her charity and to all her womanly and Christian instincts. For here was a religious com-

munity, in a land far away beyond the seas, almost beyond earthly aid, worn out with labors, crushed beneath the weight of apostolic burdens.

Unless help came, and came soon, it was evidently nearing extinction. Would she stand by unconcerned, and see with indifference this splendid institution of nearly a hundred years' existence perish from the face of the earth? Or would she, at once, enlist for this foreign mission a brave band of recruits from the many noble and willing souls around her, yearning to enter the cloister upon its restoration in France? Should she not, at once, at their head, hasten to aid the struggling work of God that must otherwise soon pass out of existence? That she should do so seemed to her an evident duty, a clear call of God. However, there were opposing reasons. There were the extraordinary favor and interest shown by the diocesan authorities in her present educational establishment that constituted a sort of claim on it, as also their fixed policy to

encourage and strengthen and multiply all similar institutions, in order thereby to build up religion once more in the diocese. She, therefore, felt that strong opposition would declare itself, and a great struggle ensue, if she persevered in her design of departing for New Orleans; especially if, as proposed, she attempted to take with her a number of other apostolic souls that might well serve as columns of religion amid the ruins and spiritual desolation at home. What was to be done? In her great prudence and humility, she would take no step without the counsel of her ecclesiastical superiors. Distrusting her own lights, she referred the whole difficulty to them for a decision.

Her spiritual director, on account of the many and various interests involved, durst not, under the circumstances, give a decision for or against her project, but advised her to leave the settlement of all her doubts in the hands of the bishop. Mgr. Fournier, on the other hand, would give no ear to her appeal. And what wonder

that he took this stand? Did her going not involve the defeat of his scheme of educational reform? As far as he saw, who would or could replace her?

And to re-establish the Ursuline Order in his diocese, where would he find recruits to replace those whom she was to take with her? What wonder, then, that the bishop should one day at last, as final answer to her anxious doubts and wearying perplexities, say: "The Pope alone, only the Pope, can authorize you to do such a thing." The meaning of his words was that, only in the case that the Pope approved her project, would he himself approve it. Well he knew that, humanly speaking, appeal to the Pope was impossible, and must, under the circumstances, be without result.

How could she, a woman, alone, helpless, at such a distance, in apparent opposition to ecclesiastical authority, and seemingly in opposition to ordinary prudence, appeal to the Pope? This was a thing not always easy, even in peace-

ful, favorable circumstances, but incomparably more difficult in the then indescribable confusion of the times.

Add to this what appeared a greater obstacle than all others—namely, that Pope Pius VII. was then, practically speaking, in the custody of his enemies while waiting to be dragged to Fontainebleau.

Consequently, to write to the Pope, or expect an answer from him, was, humanly speaking, an unmeaning act. This, however, Mme. St. Michel felt inspired by God to do. Accordingly, on December 15, 1808, she wrote her letter to the Pope. After having set forth her motive therein, she concluded thus: "Holy Father, I appeal to your apostolic tribunal. I am ready to submit to your decision. Speak. Faith teaches me that you are the voice of the Lord. I await your orders. 'Go,' or 'Stay,' from Your Holiness, will be to me the same thing."

The letter was now written. But how could it be made to reach its destination? Three long

months did it wait and yet no opportunity of sending it presented itself. At last, one day, while engaged in earnest prayer before a statue of Mary to whom she recommended the success of her project, she felt a sudden and very strong inspiration to address the Queen of Heaven in the following words that included, with her petition, a promise or vow:

"O Most Holy Virgin Mary, if you obtain for me a prompt and favorable answer to this letter, I make the promise to have you honored at New Orleans under the title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor!"

Let us, before proceeding further, note the deep and comprehensive meaning of this prayer that she feels inspired to make. It is conditional and its conditions are far-reaching. She asks that the answer to the prayer be of a twofold kind. Firstly, that it be prompt—that is, that the letter itself suffer no delay, but that, overcoming all obstacles which stand in the way, it go irresistibly and swiftly to Rome and into the

hands of the Pope; and, moreover, that the answer from His Holiness come to her in a like manner. Secondly, that the answer be favorable to her project, and, therefore, that, despite the pressing needs of France and despite the pronounced opposition of ecclesiastical authority, leave be granted her to depart for America at once, together with a devoted band of recruits enlisted by her, to join the Ursuline Community of New Orleans.

Thus, these two conditions, which, from a mere human point of view, seemed beyond the possibility of accomplishment, if, nevertheless, fulfilled, she promises, on her part, to undertake to establish in New Orleans a new devotion to the Blessed Mother of God, under the title of "Our Lady of Prompt Succor."

If, therefore, this inspiration has come from heaven; if Mary is pleased with this new appellation; if, in a word, she desires to be honored in New Orleans under this title, let her fulfill the two conditions laid down by the sup-

pliant, and then to doubt will be no longer lawful.

Now, then, did Mary accept these conditions? Did she accept the offer contained in the promise? She did accept, when she heard the suppliant's prayer that contained the petition, the conditions and the promise.

## CHAPTER III.

### God's Ways Not Our Ways.

The letter left Montpellier for Rome on March 19, 1809, and the answer is dated Rome, April 29, 1809.

Hence, the first condition, that of receiving a prompt reply, was accomplished. Let it be remarked that, owing to the reasons already stated, the promptness of the Pope's reply seems miraculous.

In our days of swift steamers and swifter railroads, fast travel is expected and required. But, with the old system of the slow-sailing vessel and the lumbering stage-coach, with its successive relays and forbidding roads, travel was hard and long, and all correspondence was consequently slow.

Add to this that, in the early years of the last century, Southern Europe being the great political storm-center, the movements of armies introduced there an element of disturbance and

lisorder that, to a great extent, paralyzed all ravel. Operations of armies on land and of navies on sea, during many years, rendered all ommunication difficult, when not impossible.

Wherefore, we naturally ask ourselves: How lid this letter of Mme. St. Michel pick its way hrough all the countless embarrassments of the oute, overcome obstacles, set aside difficulties, riumph over numberless delays, and at last, vic- orious over all, reach the papal presence? Was t the work of man? Or was it the work of God?

Nor was it all over with this wonderful let- er when it went into the Pope's hands. For it lemanded an answer. And, if one of the two onditions of the prayer was to be fulfilled, it lemanded a prompt, an immediate, answer.

Hence, no matter what pressure of business here might be from the world-wide empire of 'ius, and no matter what power might beset im with surrounding terrors, and no matter 'hat fears, perils and menaces might counsel lowness and caution on his part, that letter

claimed attention, immediate attention, and
answer pressed for departure. It must, witho
delay, hasten off to Montpellier.

Like its predecessor, the answer, too, mig
have to run the gauntlet a hundred times. Da
gers and drawbacks might beset its checker
route.

But nothing could arrest its course—nothi
under heaven. For it had a mission from Ma
This mission it must accomplish, and did
complish so well, and so promptly, that all w
had watched and prayed for its success wo
struck with amazement when it arrived at
destination.

However, not only was it prompt; this answ
was also favorable. For it brought back go
news, tidings of victory over all opposition. I
us pause here, for a moment, to see how the s
ond condition laid down in the prayer was f
filled. But, while doing so, let us bear in mi
the whole situation. Let us remember that P
VII. was well aware of the excellent and ma

reasons for which the Bishop of Montpellier refused his consent to the departure of Mme. St. Michel.

Her letter entreated permission to go. The Bishop's needs, his plans, his hopes, his words—indeed, all the circumstances of his difficult position—protested against the permission. No one better than the suffering Pope understood the deplorable state of affairs in France, and the crying need there of laborers like the applicant. Yet he hesitates not to approve of her departing for Louisiana. Indeed, no better proof can be given of the accomplishment of the second condition of the prayer than the following passage from the letter of Cardinal di Pietro, written by him to Mme. St. Michel in the Pope's name:

"MADAME:

"I am charged by Our Holy Father, Pope Pius VII., with answering your letter in his name. His Holiness cannot do otherwise than approve the esteem and attachment you have retained for the religious life, and the spirit you

have maintained within yourself of the Insti
tute of St. Ursula. The Holy Father has experi
enced the greatest consolation on learning tha
a monastery of an order so useful, which ha
rendered such signal services to the Church, i
established in Louisiana, and that piety, peac
and the most exact regularity reign therein. Yo
have the full approval of His Holiness in ac
cepting the urgent invitation of your sisters i
Louisiana to go there. You have likewise his en
tire approval in complying with the expresse
desire of those candidates of the religious lif
whom, with the aid of Divine grace, you hav
inspired with a holy enthusiasm for so excellen
a vocation.

"They desire that you put yourself at thei
head, as leader, to guide them in the long an
difficult voyage which they are about to under
take to reach the spot whither God calls them
The Holy Father wishes that you do this. Hi
Holiness is convinced that your presence, you
society, your lights, and the counsels of an ex

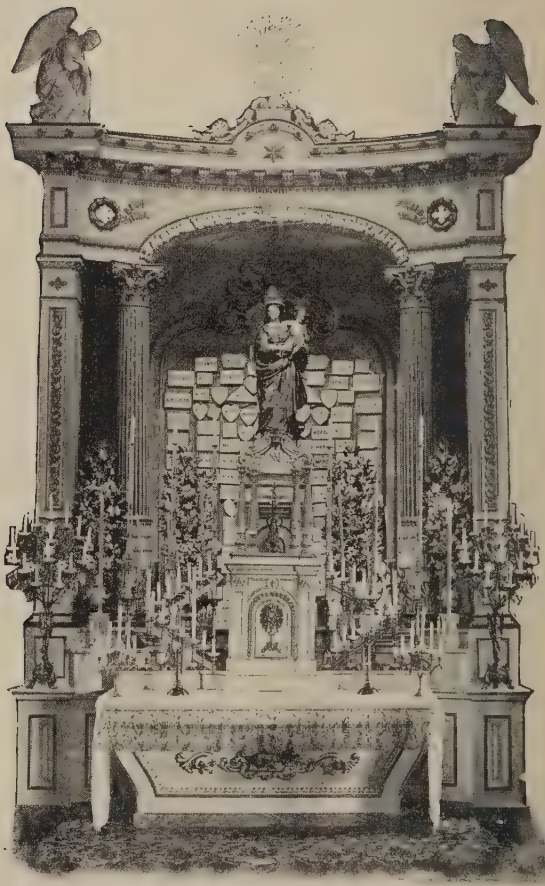
perience full of wisdom, will benefit them much in so painful a journey, and still more will serve, during their future stay in Louisiana, to keep up and increase the fervor with which your example inspired them, and to confirm them in their pious and holy resolutions. These resolutions have for object the salvation and sanctification of souls, and are essential in order to become worthy members of the religious institute which they desire to enter.

"In view of all these considerations, so precious in the eyes of faith, His Holiness bestows, with all the tenderness of a father's affection, his apostolic benediction on yourself and on all those who will enlist under your holy standard."

The answer, then, was prompt and it was favorable. What made it so but that power without whose permission not even a sparrow falls to the ground—that Providence whose mysterious and marvelous influence controls all things human, and shapes all our ways and guides all our

steps to one glorious purpose, the accomplish-
ment of His Divine Will, the carrying out of
His eternal designs? Mme. St. Michel now saw
the two conditions of her prayer fulfilled, and
there only remained to be accomplished her own
part of the wonderful compact, which was to
establish in New Orleans the devotion to Mary
under the title of "Our Lady of Prompt Suc-
cor." She, therefore, at once set about accom-
plishing her duty in the matter by ordering
sculptured a beautiful and imposing statue
of the Holy Mother of God, holding in Her arms
the Divine Child, in Whose hand was repre-
sented the globe of the earth.

In the whole of this relation of the founding
of the pilgrimage, nothing is so striking as the
manner in which the Will of Heaven shows
itself throughout. The young woman appointed
to carry out the divine purpose is chosen from
the midst of an environment not friendly to the
end in view; and in opposition to ecclesiastical
authority she is bidden by heavenly inspiration



THE ALTAR OF THE CHAPEL OF OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCC

o undertake a task that, in the circumstances, ppears impossible.

Her bishop, at once her superior and spiritual irector, unable to see the validness of such a ocation, forbids her to follow it. Hence, the nly way of realizing her heaven-sent call was o appeal for Rome's approval.

In order to secure a happy issue for this ap- eal, she is inspired to make a promise, or vow, o the Mother of God, that, if successful, she ill establish in Her honor a new and utterly nknown devotion upon the far-away shores of ouisiana.

What is the result of the promise? Success nd Heaven's blessing crown her action. The ishop of Montpellier, astonished at the turn hings took, could not help seeing the hand of od in it all. The very means that, to his mind, as to defeat at once and forever Mme. St. ichel's project, was the very one that made it riumph completely and irrevocably.

Without at all questioning the conduct of the

bishop, but with humble, unreasoning faith and childlike confidence in God and trust in her cause, she, in all simplicity, followed the course he suggested of writing to Rome. With what result? With the result that this brought on the scene the highest authority on earth—to her side a defense from which there was no appeal, and on her holy project the approval and blessing of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

"This is truly wonderful," said the bishop, on seeing the outcome of it all, "and is evidently the work of the arm of the Most High." Entirely convinced, now, of the desire of the Blessed Virgin to be honored under the title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, he wished to contribute what on him depended to this holy end, and, therefore, asked to be himself permitted to bless this statue, around which gathered such a wonderful story and to which was reserved a still more wonderful destiny. Thus, the devoted servant of God, who, with the modesty natural to woman and the humility natural to a holy re-

ligious, shrank with horror from notoriety, was, by the very force of circumstances, brought under the searchlight of publicity, the devotion to our Lady of Prompt Succor was surely, securely and severely tested, and a bishop, a cardinal and a pope were made to contribute, each one a share, great or small, direct or indirect, to the establishment of the devotion and to the founding of the pilgrimage.

Mme. St. Michel set out, at last, on her long journey, and led triumphantly to the shores of the New World, together with the promised devotion and the statue of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, a brave band of other women, inspired by Heaven to enter the Ursuline Order in Louisiana, and lend to the monastery there a new lease of life that no future vicissitudes would imperil.

They reached New Orleans on December 31, 1810. At once the cherished statue was installed in the Convent Chapel, and from that time may be said to date the devotion to the Blessed

Mother of God, under the title of "Our Lady of Prompt Succor." Like the mustard seed of the Gospel, the devotion that was planted a century ago on this strange soil has prospered and grown, and spread and blessed the land.

God's instrument in planting it has long ago gone to her rest, but the devotion has, through all these long years, given glory to God, has brought joy to many a sorrowing heart, consolation to many a grief-stricken fireside, and the triumph of grace into many a wanderer's life. The ways of Providence are indeed wonderful; but, above all, is wonderful the way in which He gently and powerfully leads all things to their appointed ends, and, at last, triumphantly accomplishes His designs. Well may we, with St. Paul, exclaim: "How inscrutable are God's judgments and how unsearchable His ways!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### The Title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

The title of a pilgrimage is often like a key to its mission. For a pilgrimage, just as any other means of grace, has, under Providence, a work to do in the salvation of souls.

Men come to Mary's shrines, and there they find Jesus and with Him Heaven. The marvelous attraction of the Mother is the magnet that powerfully draws to the Son.

These sanctuaries of Hers take their titles either from virtues and mysteries of Her life, or from the history of their origin, which they owe sometimes to visions, sometimes to miraculous graces, sometimes to vows and promises, or, in fine, sometimes to inspiration. History tells us that the Pilgrimage of Our Lady of Prompt Succor is the result of a vow prompted by inspiration.

Its object is to awaken in the hearts of men the dormant faith that must save them. Now,

this it does by showing them the goodness and power of the Mother of God exerted promptly in their behalf. This title, then, involves a display of this twofold attribute of Mary. A twofold question, therefore, is to be answered—namely, has she the power and has she the will to carry out the promise contained in the title?

"Hail, full of grace," were the words addressed by the archangel to the future Mother of Christ. Why did God bestow upon Her this fullness of grace? Was it only for Herself? Or was it for us also? St. Thomas, taking up and repeating the thought of the doctors of the Church, says that it is much, indeed, if any saint is enriched with sufficient grace to save many men; but that, if he has sufficient grace to save all men this is the plenitude of grace. Now, this plenitude, or fullness, is found in Jesus Christ as source or fountainhead, and in Mary as channel of that fountainhead, a channel that transmits it to men.

The holy doctor thus puts, in a few luminous

words, the whole reason of Catholic confidence in the help of Mary. Through Her, says he, God first gave to the world the supreme plenitude of all grace, which is Christ. Now, the Divine plan never undergoes change, but only goes on developing with time. Her donation, then, is a standing one—never to be recalled.

And, hence, Mary continues, and as long as man's earthly life lasts will continue, to give us Her great gift, which is Christ, the fullness or fountainhead of grace. She is the transmitter, she is the channel. Thus it is, says St. Bernard, that from Her all our graces come. Nor are Her blessings only in the supernatural order. For, to carry out, in behalf of Her adopted children, the heaven-imparted maternity that became Hers on Calvary, she must have all resources of power necessary to supply their manifold needs in every line of life. She is, then, full of grace, and amply equipped with benedictions of every name and kind for the children of men, to enrich their poverty, to appease their suffering, to silence their griefs.

Nor is Hers a sterile goodness, that awakens hopes and provokes prayers that are not to be realized, but a wealth of mercy that can hush every crying need and listen to every human appeal. Her heart is like the ever-flowing and overflowing fountain that never says "enough," but whose joy and glory and end of life are to enrich all who come within reach of its generosity.

However, the underlying idea of the title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor is not simply that in general, Mary may, can, or will help in answer to the Christian's prayer.

The intent of this special and peculiar title is that any prayer well made, and, at the same time, not opposed to the laws or designs of Providence, she will surely, joyfully, and promptly hear.

And thus we come to the second question: Has Mary the will to help us, and to help us promptly, so as to verify fully her title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor?

In the gospel of St. John (chapter xix, 26, 27) we read these words: "When Jesus, therefore, had seen His Mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His Mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother." According to Catholic interpretation of Scripture, these words of Christ constituted Mary Mother of men and men Her children. Now, the distinctive feature of a mother's office, as of a mother's heart, is goodness. The title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor emphasizes this truth, lays stress on this fact in that it carries with it the idea not only of benefiting, but of doing so promptly and at once. It stands for goodness unabated, unwearied, unexampled, unspeakable. As represented by this title, Mary's goodness yearns, so to say, to communicate itself, to spend itself, on others. Its beautiful, heavenly attitude here is to be all but aggressive with its blessings.

This ready generosity, this prompitude, is

necessarily a natural and inseparable feature of Divine goodness. And this glorious attribute of God so sublime, infinite, adorable, is often given as a definition of Divinity itself.

Now, alone of creatures, Mary, as Mother of God and men, reflects and mirrors in Her nature the height and depth and breadth of this Divine bounty, as much as a finite and limited nature is capable of doing.

Hence, the lofty character of Her charity, its amazing excellence and the extraordinary perfection of its promptitude. Hence, its surpassing magnificence, that is equal to the task of taking in all times, all places and all peoples.

The title, then, of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, not only implies maternal goodness in a general way as one of Mary's attributes, but it specifies and distinctly proclaims, professes and promises goodness in its immediate and practical application, or, in other words, proffers speedy help and prompt succor.

Again, goodness has its degrees. For, while

unmeasurable in the Creator, it is measurable in the creature. In the latter, therefore, it may be prompt or the reverse, according as it resembles more or less the Divine bounty. Now, there being no one so like God as His Blessed Mother, there can be no goodness as prompt as Hers, no liberality as prompt as Hers, no mercy as prompt as Hers, no generosity as prompt as Hers; in a word, no magnanimity as Godlike as Hers. This touching and beautiful promptitude of Her charity has ever spoken to the hearts of the saints.

Hence, they loved to seek and find joy and comfort in meditating on the two circumstances of Her life in which it appeared most striking—namely, in the visit to St. Elizabeth and at the marriage feast of Cana.

The promptness of Her charity on the occasion of Her visit to St. Elizabeth comes before us with an incomparable force and vividness, and appears in an admirable light. Indeed, were we not used to see the hand and designs of Provi-

dence in all earthly happenings, we might well wonder and ask ourselves why the mystery of the Visitation did not, ages ago, rather than in these late days, inspire the devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

In its usual plain language, the Gospel simply announces that "Mary, rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judea." We note, however, three remarkable things in this simple event. First, prompt compliance with Heaven's inspiration to go on Her eventful journey. Second, the beautiful fruit of Mary's prompt succor—that is, two good works, the one in the natural, and the other in the supernatural, order. Third, the promptitude that was the marking characteristic of Her whole conduct on this occasion, despite the difficult circumstances of the arduous undertaking. Hence, lest this last fact might escape the notice of men, or not attract their attention, the spirit of God emphasizes it by the use of the forcible word "haste." The glorious

'Magnificat,'' that she uttered on this occasion, nd that all generations have intoned after her, proclaimed, together with God's praises, her own prompt, incomparable charity.

Again, in after days, when Her Divine Son vas about to inaugurate His public life and ninistry, once more Mary revealed, in a triking manner, Her unbounded kindness of eart. At the marriage feast of Cana appeared n strong relief the brave and marvelous ten- derness of Her zeal, when, even at the cost of a niracle, she came to the rescue of Her host, and proved to be, even then, truly Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

At that wedding, at which Jesus and Mary vere present, the wine gave out before the feast vas over. However, the wonderful watchfulness f a mother's eye detected the deficiency. Her nerciful heart took pity on the painful embar- assment of Her host. She foresaw the distress- ng scene that must follow, and, therefore, She lelicately suggested to Her Divine Son the

needed help. At Her request was wrought th miracle that made water wine, although H hour of miracles had not yet struck. And thu already at that early day, Mary vindicated He right to the beautiful title of "Our Lady Prompt Succor."

From that day to this She has been effectin miracles of help in all the needs of all the chi dren of men that call upon Her. And the ma velous event of Cana but marks the beginnin of a history of mercies that will close only wit that of the world.

In the long and checkered career of th Church of Christ, and in all the stormy ha penings of its wonderful life, Mary has ev been present on Her mission of prompt succo Was the mailed hand of the persecutor lifted warfare against that Church? With prom succor came Mary to breathe heroism into th hearts of the weak, to rally the wavering, crown the brave. Did heresy, with serpenti trail, enter the household of the Faith? At one

ith prompt succor, came Mary to crush the erpent's head. Did dark and manifold calamies, in each succeeding age, bring distress, desotion and anguish into the hearts of the people f God? With prompt succor came Mary to stay r stem the evil.

The devotion to our Lady of Prompt Succor, hen, though revealed in and for our times, does, reality, little more than proclaim a fact, or eries of facts, that has been going on since the eginning, and that a kindly Providence dorees shall go on till the end.

It proclaims in a new way an old truth, that Iary is the Mother of men; that, therefore, Her eady and devoted love neither sleeps nor slumers, but will toil on for them until the term at ast is reached.

## CHAPTER V.

### The Feast of Our Lady of Prompt Succor

After many a strange vicissitude, as already related, the devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Succor, together with its guardian, Mme. St. Michel, reached the shores of Louisiana, and came to dwell in the Crescent City. Now, on what favored spot will it fix its residence? What fortunate site will it choose for its home?

On the spot where now stands the old diocesan seminary, on Ursuline, between Chartres and Levee Streets, there stood, in the early part of the last century, the Convent Chapel of St. Mary, venerable alike for age and noble service. To this chapel, through long years, had come day after day, the saintly inmates of the adjoining convent, to chant the Holy Office, to partake of the sacred mysteries and to enjoy communion with their God. Here, as members of the ancient Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, gathered regularly the early mothers

of Louisiana to lay at the feet of their Queen their trials, their prayers and their sorrows. Here came the orphaned little ones of the unpitying epidemics and colonial wars, to tell their affliction to the Mother of all unfortunates. Here, through the long course of passing years, came the victims of every misfortune to unfold to Mary, Help of Christians, their unnumbered woes.

It was only a chapel, but speech cannot tell how dear it was to the popular heart. It was sacred to all, for it was the sanctuary of the Immaculate One; it was the Shrine of the Mother of God, where might always be found with saving grace that peace which the world cannot give. And so here gathered high and low, rich and poor, saint and sinner. It had a benediction for them, each and all. The holy Shrine has long vanished with the past, but its memory will never die.

On the last day of the year 1810, as above stated, arrived in New Orleans, from France,

Mme. St. Michel and her apostolic band of companions, bringing with them the devotion and the Statue of Our Lady of Prompt Succor. No fitter or happier resting-place could have been found for both than the sanctuary of old St. Mary.

Here, then, for many a long year to come, the historic statue was to make its home, and from the very day of its arrival was to date the beginning of those blessings, favors and graces whose generous flow has now known neither rest nor pause since well-nigh a century.

The next necessary measure looking to the complete and perfect organization of the devotion was the appointment of a feast day. Its regular recurrence, its proper observance, and religious celebration would naturally and necessarily have for effect and result to impart cohesion, strength, solidity, as well as formal and ecclesiastical standing in the eyes of all, to the devotion. But how was this to be brought about?

The choice of a day for the feast, a reason

for the choice, the Church's approval of the choice, all this implied problems not easy to solve, difficulties not easy to overcome. But Heaven again came to the rescue. And man's influence in the selection and settling of the feast was to be as small and insignificant as it was in the solving of other difficulties which the devotion had met with.

In His own appointed season, and in His own wonderful way, Divine Providence chose the day. On the eighth of January, 1815, took place a national event, the battle of New Orleans, that, in the designs of Heaven, was to exercise a decisive influence in the spread of the Devotion and be the occasion of heralding its efficacy far and wide.

The triumph won on the battlefield of Chalmette, and by all Catholics attributed to the intervention of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, will be related elsewhere in this work. Suffice it here to say that, on that occasion, a vow was made to Our Lady of Prompt Succor by the

Ursuline Community of New Orleans to have each year, on the eighth of January, anniversary of the battle, a solemn high mass offered up in Her honor if she would grant victory to the American arms. The favor was granted. Now ninety years have elapsed since that fateful day, and never has the eighth of January been without the promised solemn high mass, attended with all the magnificent ceremonial befitting the occasion.

It may be noted here that, during many years the annual public commemoration of Mary's triumph, though naturally belonging to Our Lady's Chapel, took place, not there, but in the Cathedral Church. Why so? From man's point of view, it was in order that the great crowds of worshipers, as well as the splendid civil and military array, might find room in the larger edifice, and thus greater solemnity might be imparted to the celebration. But, weighty though these reasons might be, it was, from God's point of view, in order that thus, year after year, in

e official church of the chief pastor, in his esence, and with his all-round sanction, the votion to Our Lady of Prompt Succor might officially authorized, explained, preached, oclaimed to all; her favors and miracles be blished and announced to the world. Thus, o, this celebration in the Cathedral Church as the more advisable, as the Vicar of Christ d as yet taken no action in the matter. Rome d not as yet spoken or given its official sanc-on to the pilgrimage.

In his pastoral letter of the year 1893, Archshop Janssens, after relating the miraculous ctory of Chalmette, says:

"For many years after (1815), Church and tate united on the eighth of January in a serve of thanksgiving at the Cathedral in honor Our Lady of Prompt Succor. The approval Rome, ever prudent in such matters, was ill lacking until Pope Pius IX., by a rescript September 11, 1851, granted the special privige to chant in the Ursuline Chapel the mass

of the Blessed Virgin on January eighth, t
Feast of Our Lady of Prompt Succor."

The great central fact in the history of t
devotion, that is here only briefly stated by t
Archbishop, calls for more explicit comment a
invites documentary evidence. It was the fi
Papal pronouncement, the first official a
emanating from Rome, in behalf of the Dev
tion to Our Lady of Prompt Succor. It wa
therefore, of great value, as it put an end
delays in the spread of the devotion, closed t
door on further doubts concerning the mind
the Church, and opened the way for a ser
of future Papal declarations to the sa
purpose.

For forty years, from 1810 to 1850, the fait
ful, the clergy, and, more important than a
the Queen of Heaven herself, were actors
witnesses, or both, in the development of t
devotion. From year's end to year's end, t
faithful in large numbers repaired to the Co
vent Chapel and piously and prayerfully ga

d around the venerable statue. Here they ured forth their supplications, appealed for ir needs, and were heard. Here, novenas went endlessly; here, piety in its many forms was esent; here, the Holy Sacrifice was offered up. And in answer to all this prayer of faith, aven's blessings came down in abundance on the faithful. Nor were the chief pastors all in any way blind or deaf to what was ng on. They, on the contrary, took part themves in the celebrations and in the preachings. ey issued pastorals, they granted indulgences, ereby to confirm and spread the devotion. ese manifold pious activities, going on so g, culminated at last in a movement that had en gathering force all these years. And the n of the movement was to secure from Rome cognition of the Devotion and of the Pilgrime. Enlightened Catholic opinion, unanimity mind amongst the faithful, commendation m the clergy, Heaven's continued favors, all ged the chief pastor to take action and apply Rome for the desired recognition.

At last, Archbishop Blanc, encouraged ar
strengthened by so many solid reasons, directe
the Ursuline Community, to whose guardiansh
Heaven had intrusted the Devotion and th
Pilgrimage, to formulate to this effect, in th
name of all, a petition to His Holiness Pop
Pius IX. This petition, approved and confirme
by diocesan authority, was to be communicate
by himself to the Sovereign Pontiff. I
obedience to this order, the petition was at on
drawn up.

An analysis of the same shows that it co
sisted of two parts. In the first part is set for
the object of the request—namely, to obtain
His Holiness the privilege to celebrate the Fea
of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, and to sing th
mass thereof, on the eighth day of January eac
year. In the second part are stated the motiv
of the applicants in asking for the above favor
They are of four kinds. The first reason is th
blessings and favors of every kind are obtaine
through the power and intercession of Mar

hen asked through this title. The second is hat the Devotion originated in the securing of avors and graces beneficial and peculiar to the nstitute of St. Ursula. The third is that, as his- ory attests, forty years had elapsed since the stablishment of the Devotion, and during all hat long period Mary, when invoked under the tle of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, was ac- ustomed to grant what was asked. In fine, the ourth reason given is one of gratitude that calls or this public testimony and expression of hanks for past and present bounties.

In reply to the petition, Cardinal Alex. Bar- abo, Secretary of the Congregation for the ropagation of the Faith, communicated the fol- owing answer to Archbishop Blanc, empower- ng him to act in the premises in keeping with he same petition:

"In audience with Our Holy Father, obtained eptember 21, 1851, Our Most Holy Father ius, by Divine Providence ninth of the name, cting on the report addressed to him by us the

undersigned, Secretary of the Congregation fo the Propagation of the Faith, returns with fa vorable answer the petition to the Most Reveren Archbishop of New Orleans. The powers aske in the request are granted, notwithstanding al custom to the contrary.

"Given at Rome, from the Palace of the Sa cred Congregation, in the year and on the day a above, etc.

"ALEX. BARNADO, *Secr.*"

Archbishop Blanc, in turn, transmitted to th Superior of the Ursuline Community in New Or leans, through the following official letter, th above concession and favor, thus putting int effect the privilege received from Rome:

"In view of the present accompanying lette and in virtue of the powers granted us by th Sovereign Pontiff in the same letter, we com municate to the Religious of St. Ursula of ou city the privilege of having mass chanted eac year on the eighth day of January, in honor o the Blessed Virgin, under the title of Our Lad of Prompt Succor.

"Given at New Orleans, the sixth day of ugust, A. D. 1852.

"+ ANT., *Archbishop of New Orleans.*"

Thus, the Papal decree, obtained on the Feast St. Matthew the Apostle, September 21, 1851, tablishing the new feast, was promulgated the ear following, on the day on which we com-emorate the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus hrist. Thenceforth, the blessing of Rome rested the Pilgrimage, and would, through the suc-eding centuries, encircle it with the enduring lo of Catholicity.

In the year 1824, the former Ursuline Con-nt, situated on Chartres, between Ursuline nd Hospital Streets, passed into the use of the clesiastical authorities, and its owners, the Re-gious of St. Ursula, betook themselves to their ew establishment below the city, where they well to-day.

The historic statue accompanied its guardians, nd went to make its home where we find it at resent, in the Chapel of Our Lady of Prompt

Succor. Here, now, and no longer at the Cathe dral, since many years, takes place the annua celebration of the eighth of January. And s the anniversary of the battle won and the Feas of Her who won it mingle together, and blen in one to make doubly glorious the same day.

Thus, Our Lady of Prompt Succor, at last by the fiat of Rome, entered into possession o Her chosen feast, and that feast was inscribe on the shining roll of ages, that already con tained the glorious names of so many other mar velous feasts, each of which tells, in its own touching tale, some one or other of the merit or mercies of Mary.

## CHAPTER VI.

### The Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

A natural outcome or fruit of the Pilgrimage Our Lady of Prompt Succor was the Archfraternity that bears this, Her name.

The devotions in honor of the Blessed Mother God have, each one, a special mission to the rld.

This mission is to bring out in relief some venly feature, or to honor some mystery of r glorious life, that may influence and imve our own; or, in fine, to inspire some helpmode or means or measure that will enable us better to secure the one thing necessary— sanctification. Hence, the numerous forms piety that have marked the course of Chrisn ages in their zealous endeavors to at once e glory to the Mother of Christ and to pro-te the eternal interests of the faithful of rist. One of the beautiful and holy institu-

tions thus inspired by faith is the Confraterr

It is at once simple in its outlines and c prehensive in the number and efficacy of means which it employs to reach its end. end is twofold: the glory of God and the g of the individual. And while, as its name gests, it forwards, by its manifold fraternal the spiritual interests of the members, it enables us to realize, as nothing else can, true are the consoling words of Christ: " yoke is sweet and my burden is light."

What is a confraternity? A confraternit an association of pious persons, established a view to advancing their own sanctificatio that of others. It answers a need born of cumstances that surround human life. whether resulting from man's physical or m weakness, or from the very shortness of itself that confines his efforts within a nar span, the usefulness or necessity of associa with others, in his spiritual combat, is evi to the Christian who seriously wishes to lay

reasures for another world. Hence, Scripture, o less than experience, is ever reminding us iat the words and examples and prayers of thers contribute powerfully to success in work- ig out our salvation. What wonder, then, that Ioly Church has only words of praise and en- ouragement for confraternities!

Naturally enough, then, did the welfare of his ock inspire the chief pastor of this diocese to ound the Confraternity of Our Lady of Prompt uccor, and thus to put at the disposal of that ock such a means of grace as has been the ause or occasion of salvation to countless souls the past Christian ages. Long had Archbishop anssens entertained the design and desire of ringing this about, until, at last, circumstances ermitted him, in the year 1895, to issue the llowing address to the faithful of his diocese:

THE ARCHCONFRATERNITY.

"In our pastoral letter of 1893, we spoke of ie great favors the diocese had obtained from

God through the intercession of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, and we took pleasure in proclaiming Her Our Lady of Louisiana and our own patroness, to whom we consecrated ourselves, our clergy, our laity and all the good works of the diocese.

"Since then we have learned of many other favors, spiritual and temporal, obtained not only in Louisiana, but also in other States, by thus invoking Our Blessed Lady.

"We ourselves feel convinced that the Blessed Mother has promptly assisted us in our administration for the welfare of this diocese; we feel, moreover, convinced that She is well pleased to be invoked by the title of Prompt Succor, a title which seems most appropriate in this hurrying age of steam and electricity, an age of feverish activity in all the pursuits of life.

"The inventions of this age, which urge us on in our daily actions, are blessings denied our ancestors, but bestowed upon us by the Lord. They are blessings for which we should feel

+ F. JANSSENS,
ARCHBISHOP OF NEW ORLEANS.

nkful to God, who hid them for so many cen-
ies in the bosom of nature, and revealed them
us for our welfare and benefit.

'We feel grateful to Our Blessed Lady for all
r favors granted us, and, moved by this sen-
ent of gratitude, we have approved the crea-
n and the rules of the Confraternity of Our
dy of Prompt Succor.

'And, in order that this Confraternity may
the means of even greater blessings, we have
ained, on the occasion of our last visit to Our
ly Father Pope Leo XIII., several indul-
ces for those who shall be enrolled as mem-
s therein.

'We were, moreover, given the hope that the
nfraternity would be approved of as an Arch-
fraternity, as soon as several other confra-
nities could be erected.

'It is our hope and trust that, with an in-
ase of devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Suc-
, and a deeper confidence in Her protection,
r Blessed Lord, Her dear and divine Son, will

grant even still greater favors, both spirit
and temporal, in the future than have been
stowed in the past. The solemn erection of
Confraternity will take place on the eighth
January, 1895, Feast of Our Lady of Pron
Succor, at the Ursuline Convent in this ci
which is the cradle of the devotion."

In compliance with the directions of the Ar
bishop's pastoral letter, the inauguration of
Confraternity occurred at the appointed ti
and place. To the honor of Our Lady of Pron
Succor, and to the great delight of Her clien
the applications for membership were ma
and foretokened future success. The w
seemed like an inspiration from above, so pro
ising and prosperous were its beginnings.

Indeed, the needs of the times called for
And it came with a mission from Heaven,
mission to do a great work in a special field. T
great work that it has to do implies great grac
And thus did Rome, or rather Divine Pro
dence, establish in our midst a never-faili

ırce of sanctification. In this manner is placed the disposal of every parish, or rather of ery Catholic of every parish, a powerful or- nization, in whose membership each one may d a constant inspiration of courage, an undant store of good example, an unflagging pply of zeal, a perpetual incentive to good rks, a fruitful source of strength in adversity d of perseverance, at all times, in the service God.

Hence, the membership ran up rapidly. So ıch so that not only was the confraternity at ce and easily organized, but in a short time, der its inspiration, a number of other con- ıternities came into existence. Thus, already ly in the year 1897, application could be made Rome for the erection of an Archconfrater- y. Wherefore, no obstacle being encountered, d all necessary conditions being fulfilled, Our ly Father Pope Leo XIII., himself a devout vant of Mary, at once complied with the re- est.

Not long after, His Grace Archbishop Ja
sens received from the Prefect of the Congre
tion for the Propagation of the Faith, His Ei
nence Cardinal Ledochowski, the following
cree of His Holiness, that established the Ar
confraternity.

The decree:

"Several years ago the Most Reverend Fr
cis Janssens, Archbishop of New Orle
(United States of North America), establis
at New Orleans, under the title of Our Lady
Prompt Succor, the Confraternity whose obj
was to spread devotion to the Blessed Virgin a
protect the members against spiritual and te
poral dangers. Moreover, on the eleventh day
June, 1894, he obtained of His Holiness the
vor that the members of the said Brotherh
might be able to gain a plenary indulgence
certain days of the year by complying with
usual conditions. Besides this, he now furt
prays that said Confraternity be at pres
raised to the rank of an Archconfraterni

Wherefore, His Holiness Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII., in the audience of April 27, 1897, acting on the report submitted to him by the undersigned Secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, deigned to establish and raise in perpetuity the said Confraternity (canonically erected in New Orleans) to the rank of Archconfraternity. This promotion carries with it all the ordinary and customary rights, privileges, honors, priorities and indults. To the present and future officers and members of the same Archconfraternity he has conceded and granted, in perpetuity, the right that enables them, with the approval of the then actual Archbishop, to freely and licitly aggregate to the Archconfraternity any and all other confraternities of the same title and institution within the limits of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, and (meantime observing the Constitution, "Quecunque" of Pope Clement VIII., as also the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences of January 8, 1861), to com-

municate to them all the indulgences granted b
the Apostolic See to the Archconfraternity itsel
and communicable to others.

"His Holiness has ordered the transmission o
this present decree concerning all these thing

"Given at Rome, from the Palace of the Sa
cred Congregation for the Propagation of th
Faith, on the 28th day of April, A. D. 1897.

"M. Card. Ledochowski, *Pref.*

"A. Archb. Larissen, *Secr.*"

This action of Rome, in raising the Confra
ternity to the rank of an Archconfraternity, wa
the third of a series of measures that publicl
and solemnly sanctioned the Devotion. The firs
of these measures was the approval of a feas
to be celebrated on the eighth of January. Th
second was the granting of indulgences for th
practice of the Devotion. In fine, the third wa
the creating of an Archconfraternity under th
title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

Thus, as is evident, Heaven and earth are a

ıe in favoring and promoting the Devotion, ıd thus, too, are we brought to the latest tes- mony of good-will on the part of the Vicar of hrist in behalf of the Pilgrimage of Our Lady Prompt Succor, which is the solemn crown- g of Her statue.

## CHAPTER VII.

### The Crowning of the Statue of Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

To a crown, or a crowning, there is ever deep meaning, a history. For it implies a t umph of some excellence, a royalty of some so Whether merited and won in the physical, tellectual, moral, political or spiritual order things, it stands for some extraordinary periority, and is the highest symbol of approv the noblest testimony of worth, that is giv man to bestow. Hence, its bestowal is ra Hence, too, coronations of sovereigns are eve that mark off the various stages or eras of people's history.

The coronation decreed by Rome for statue of Our Lady of Prompt Succor carr with it a deep meaning and a vast significan For while, on the one hand, it meant to expr and declare to Mary Herself the admirati gratitude and love of Her faithful people

Her many and magnificent mercies to them, it meant, on the other hand, to remind an onlooking world of the countless benefits and blessings that, since long years, had been coming to all from Her more than royal bounty.

More, even, than this. For the crowning of this statue marked off a great historic period in the life of our Louisiana Church. The triumph of religion reflected in this great ceremony naturally awakened in all minds the memory of other days, the memory of a long and arduous past, of a struggle that reached back over two hundred years of life. It reminded of the flowering and fruiting of an apostleship that began under the lilied banner of France, advanced under the storied standard of Spain, and reached its present prosperous state under the protecting folds of our own starry flag.

This statue, then, of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, that, even uncrowned, meant so much to us Catholics on account of its historic past, as well as on account of its mission of mercy

and of love, means to us now still more, on account of the crown that it wears to-day, and because that crown was bestowed by Christ's Vicar on earth, the immortal Leo XIII.

The Most Reverend Archbishop Janssens, inspired by his great love for the Holy Mother of God, had, since his advent as head of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, done much towards spreading devotion to Her under the title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor. However, he had not accomplished all his aims and ambitions in this respect. Above all did he yearn to behold with his own eyes, before death should summon him away, the liturgical crowning of Her venerable statue. Long indeed had it waited, since the year 1810, until some devoted apostle of Mary should appear to secure it this honor. This apostle at last appeared, and at once set about taking the necessary steps towards the realization of his pious and noble project.

His visit *ad limina* in 1894 afforded him an excellent opportunity to lay the matter before

the Holy Father. The Community of the Order of St. Ursula, as constituted guardians of the statue, had, at his request, prepared a formal petition to this effect. This petition, which in reality prayed and pleaded in the name of the entire Catholic population of the diocese, could apparently expect only success.

However, a true man of faith who undertook naught of importance without first commending it to Heaven in prayer, Archbishop Janssens had long and earnestly asked God's blessing on his enterprise. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, he asked and hoped for everything. Nor was he disappointed. She, indeed, came with prompt succor. His prayer was heard more fully than he expected or dreamed of. For, to the very great surprise and joy of the pious prelate, the Holy Father at once assented to the petition and cordially approved his project.

This pontifical approval took official form in the following decree that was issued shortly after.

The decree:

"Ever since the year 1810, as has been sub
mitted to us, the Statue of the Blessed Virgin
under the title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor
has been exposed to the public veneration o
the faithful in the Chapel of the Nuns of St
Ursula in the City of New Orleans, in th
United States of North America. Graces and fa
vors have not been wanting, by which She mani
fested Her desire to be honored under this title

"The Most Reverend Archbishop of New Or
leans, moved by these graces and favors, and
at the same time desirous of increasing more and
more among the faithful devotion to and con
fidence in the Mother of God, has lately pro
claimed the Blessed Virgin, under the title o
Our Lady of Prompt Succor, as the Patroness
of all Louisiana.

"Now, whereas, the Reverend Mother Su
perior of the same Monastery of the Ursulin
Sisters just mentioned has besought the Holy

e to decree the coronation of the above-named
atue of the Blessed Virgin; and, whereas, the
oresaid Archbishop has, to the utmost of his
wer, recommended this petition, His Holiness
pe Leo XIII., on the report made by the un-
rsigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation
r the Propagation of the Faith, in the
dience of the 17th day of June, 1894, has
igned to kindly grant the petition of the ap-
icant, and has appointed, by a special delega-
n, the same Archbishop to put it into execu-
n. Wherefore, His Holiness has ordained the
patch of the present decree, by which are
ven to the Archbishop of New Orleans all the
culties requisite and opportune in order that
may proceed, in the name of His Holiness,
the solemn coronation of the Statue of Our
dy of Prompt Succor, which is exposed to
blic veneration in the aforesaid Chapel.

'Given at Rome, from the Palace of the Sa-
id Congregation for the Propagation of the

Faith, on the twenty-first day of June, of
year A. D. 1894.

"M. Card. Ledochowski, *Pref*

"A. Archb. Larissen, *Secr.*"

This extraordinary decree confers one of
rarest privileges. And at the same time that
fully reveals the mind of the Pope and of
Church concerning the devotion to Our La
of Prompt Succor, it speaks to the hearts
the faithful and impresses upon them the
portance of this devotion in a manner th
nothing else could.

The Most Reverend Archbishop Janssens, w
was delegated to act in the name of His Ho
ness, appointed November 10th as the day
which the ceremony of coronation was to
carried out. Although, only a few weeks p
vious to this, another famous American shri
was thus honored, the event taking place
Guadalupe, near the City of Mexico, still, th
was the first of the kind to occur within

mits of our own Republic. Hence, the litur-ical rite was to be carried out with all possible nagnificence.

A stirring pastoral letter of the Archbishop o the faithful, followed by a public novena of rayers in all the churches and chapels of the rchdiocese, impressed on all minds the im-ortance that Holy Church attached to the com-ng event, and to the devotion in honor of Our ady of Prompt Succor.

How deeply the people took to heart the les-on of the hour might be inferred from many acts. The following one, amongst others, re-ealed their sentiments. When an appeal was ade by the committee in charge to the faithful contribute, in any manner they might refer, to the making of the crowns, such as the quantity and quality of gems, wels, trinkets—in a word, of all kinds of ch family treasures—that flowed in, that it ould be difficult to estimate their value. This yal generosity of the people made it possible

for those in charge to rise to the occasion and secure a masterpiece of art. Hence, the two diadems for Mother and Child are marvels of beauty, grace and dignity. And thus, from this splendid outpouring of wealth, came the beautiful creation that does honor to all.

As the appointed day approached, preparations on a vast scale assumed shape. Invitations to the celebration had gone broadcast in all directions, especially over the territory of the archdiocese.

In answer thereto, the members of the laity clergy and hierarchy, from near and far, arrived in large numbers with the dawn of the great day. However, the All-Wise Providence that dispenses sunshine and shower, bestowed on the occasion, not the former, but the latter.

Hence, the grand rite of the liturgy was abridged in its execution on account of the inclement state of the weather. In the great courtyard, surrounded by the several convent buildings, the sacred and historic scene was to have

n place, but circumstances permitted the
ddid program to be carried out only in a
ed manner within the friendly shelter of
convent galleries and the Chapel. And thus
glorious pomp of the ritual, that was to
unfolded at ease in all its magnificence, had
sarily to be so curtailed that only its main
nes could be executed.

ten o'clock the great ceremony began with
st procession, in which pupils of all the va-
schools, pious sodalities, religious com-
ties, devout associations, the faithful, the
y and the hierarchy took part.

llowing these was carried in solemn pomp
venerated Statue, with its twofold crown,
the bands of music, the city church bells
the thundering voice of the cannon com-
led in wondrous harmony. However, the un-
rd condition of the weather not permitting
l unfolding of the program, the procession
so abbreviated that, after a considerable cir-
though shorter than had been planned, it
ced its steps to the Chapel.

In this venerable Chapel of Mary, then ag
with its marvelous magnificence of lights
flowers, and not in the open air, as had
hoped, the historic scene was to transpire. H
after the solemn chant of the Church for s
occasions, was executed the imposing cerem
of the Sacred Liturgy, for the coronation
carried out as much as possible in its detail

As Papal Delegate, Archbishop Jans
blessed the two crowns; the Papal Decree,
dering the crowning, was read in Latin,
French and in English; and then, with acc
panying prayer, the respective crowns v
placed upon the head of the venerable St
of Mary and upon that of the Divine Chil
her arms.

Immediately upon this, a rapturous outb
of enthusiastic song, together with the swel
peal of the organ, united with the continu
thunders of the cannon to tell the outside w
that the event was accomplished and that
Lady of Prompt Succor was crowned.

Then followed that most religious, and in the
s of Faith most august, of all Catholic rites,
ntifical High Mass. Whilst the Archbishop
ciated, ranged around the altar, with their
verend Chaplains, were the Right Reverend
elates of the Ecclesiastical Province—Bishops
nn, of Dallas; Forrest, of San Antonio; Hes-
, of Natchez; Meerschaert, of Indian Terri-
y, and Verdaguer, of Laredo—thus represent-
the great Catholic Church that, from East
l West and North and South, had gathered
e, on this day, to do honor to the Queen of
aven.

At the Gospel, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Heslin,
dressing in English the audience in the
urch or chapel, explained in a masterly man-
the meaning of the magnificent ceremony
ich they had come to witness.

At the same time the Rt. Rev. Bishop
erschaert, from the beautifully bunted and
nnered platform erected in the convent court-
d, delivered an eloquent discourse in French

to the great crowd outside. The vast throng that assisted at the ceremony of the crowning cannot be estimated with any precision. Long hours before the event, large numbers, anticipating an extraordinary attendance, went to the grounds almost as soon as the gates were thrown open in the morning.

The ceremony, had there been no rain, was to have taken place in the open air, in the great convent courtyard. Hence, the wide galleries were soon crowded with an expectant multitude, whilst steadily the grounds below filled up until they were one dense mass of moving, heaving humanity. Chapel, convent galleries, gardens, avenues, streets, all teemed with people; and still they came, still streamed in from all directions.

If thus, with unpropitious weather, sloughy roads and overcast skies, the crowds were so large, there certainly was no hazard to predict, as many did, that, with favoring circumstances, the attendance of a prodigious multitude would have been an assured fact.

As the Holy Sacrifice drew to a close, so did likewise the great ceremony itself. At the conclusion of the mass, Archbishop Janssens made a brief and enthusiastic address to the assembled multitude.

And while, in their name, he consecrated all to the great Mother of God, he entreated them, at the same time, to pledge themselves to be faithful in Her service until death would at last summon them away to another and better world.

Each of the attendant Bishops then, in turn, imparted his blessing to the immense throng, the "Te Deum" was chanted, and thus came to a close a day eventful in the history of the Church in the United States, extraordinary in the history of Catholicity in Louisiana, and, above all days, glorious in the annals of the Pilgrimage of Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Echoes From the Crowning.

The relation of the great ceremony of the coronation would be incomplete were there no key to reveal the meaning of the event. Now, the orators of the occasion furnish this key, and in eloquent language explain the significance of the ceremony, and not inaptly might their discourses be called the official mind of the Church on the subject.

In justice, then, to the cause of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, are reproduced here passages selected from these addresses.

At the same time that the Rt. Rev. Bishop Heslin spoke in English to the audience within the chapel, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Meerschaert addressed in French the faithful outside. In their published report of the latter's sermon, the daily papers of that date give the substance of what is styled an impromptu discourse.

This discourse, however, from which is taken

ıe following excerpt, though impromptu, re-
eals the beautiful thoughts and praises of Mary
ıat slumbered in the heart of Her apostle and
ıly awaited an occasion for utterance:

"Dear Brethren in Christ—The words of
avid applying to man, that God had crowned
im with glory and holiness, as His master-
iece, are especially applicable to the Mother
f Our Saviour. And this, for the perfections
he enjoyed and for the signal honor conferred
ı Her in being chosen to give to earth its
aviour, the Creator of all things, Who came
ere and suffered and died for the redemption
f mankind.

"When the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary
ıd gave Her God's message, 'Hail, full of grace,
ıe Lord is with Thee, blessed art Thou amongst
omen,' She was at that time so perfect in
race, piety and duty that She deserved to be
rowned with all the glories of the heavenly
ourt. Nor did time lessen Her right to that
rown. She consented to become the Mother of

Christ, and upon that Son for thirty-three year
She lavished the treasures of a motherly affec
tion. Aye, even more; for how often and hov
cruelly was Her loving heart lacerated when th
divine, meek and suffering Christ was made th
object of scorn and scoff and cruelty on the par
of men! And how great was the sympathizin
anguish of Her parental heart when She sav
Him dying upon the cross, while She, the in
trepid Mother, stood weeping for the unspeak
able pains inflicted on that Son! His cros
saved us.

"Mary is, then, the glory of the new Jeru
salem, the glory of Israel, the glory of th
Church triumphant, and, after Her Divine Son
the joy of the elect in Heaven.

"She is no less both the glory and the cham
pion of the Church militant on earth. If, now, i
pleases God to take Mary to Heaven and t
crown Her Queen of the celestial realms, hov
much more should we here on earth be willin
to place upon Her pure and holy brow a brigh

diadem of priceless jewels? What have other lands not done for Her? France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Germany and other countries have reared majestic basilicas, imposing churches, towering monuments of architectural art, as well as humble chapels, for the worship of Mary, Mother of God; of Mary, the benign intercessor before the throne of Heaven on behalf of Her lowly children here on earth.

"It would be useless, as well as impossible, to enumerate here all the facts that go to prove the greatness and power of Mary. But it behooves young America to do its part, and to proclaim in its own way the wonderful merit of the worship of Mary. And, hence, one of the forms of this cult of the Mother of God was solemnly illustrated recently at Guadalupe, Mexico, and the present celebration of Our Lady of Prompt Succor is the reflex of that imposing ceremony, which I had the pleasure and the inestimable boon of witnessing in the historic land of the Aztecs.

"Now, not to mention other titles of Mary to your special love and veneration, you all know, Catholics of New Orleans, that in the year 1815, when the enemy was at your gates and threatened death and destruction, carnage and devastation to your city, you know, I say, that through the prayers of the Ursuline Nuns offered to Our Lady of Prompt Succor, and the pleadings of the holy Bishop Dubourg, the city was saved, the enemy was utterly routed, and the Lord of Hosts crowned Jackson with the laurels of victory. Then, and ever since then, Our Lady of Prompt Succor has listened to the prayers of Her children. And, hence, Our Holy Father Leo XIII. has granted a special permission to crown Her venerated statue.

"This is a most glorious event in the annals of your city and of your State. It does honor to the people, because it is the first statue of the Blessed Virgin thus crowned in the United States. We have placed upon the brow of Our Lady of Prompt Succor a magnificent diadem

of gold, studded with precious stones, the munificent gift of noble ladies who have sacrificed their ornaments and their jewels in order to deck the brow of that dear Mother and Protectress. And, surely, She is worthy of all the honors we pay Her! For She has abundantly proved that She loves the people of this fair city and of this prosperous and progressive State. It remains for us to ask Her to continue that love, and, with it, the extraordinary graces and favors She has vouchsafed us in the past."

At the gospel of the mass celebrated on the occasion of the crowning of the statue, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Heslin delivered the masterly address from which we cull the following passages:

"Man's helplessness, however distressing to his pride, is an undeniable truth. From the cradle to the coffin, he is dependent on others. And, although this dependence may vary in degree, yet it always exists as a token of our infirmity and a source of our humiliation. In

babyhood, this helplessness is absolute and universal. As years advance, and man's powers develop, it diminishes, but never wholly disappears. And it returns again in full force with the approach of old age. Man is helpless in body and in mind, in temporal and in spiritual matters. The food which sustains his life comes from the earth on which he treads, or from the animals which he despises, and is prepared and administered, for a long period, by other hands than his. The raiment that protects him from the inclemency of the weather, and which is often an occasion of pride and vanity, is furnished from the same despised sources. The learning of which he may boast he has derived from others; the honors he may enjoy he owes to his neighbors; the wealth in which he rolls is created for him by other hands; his health and strength and beauty of person are gratuitous gifts bestowed upon him without any merit of his. And, if such is the case in temporal matters, much more is it so in spiritual, in which, left to himself, he is utterly powerless.

"None better than the Doctor of the Gentiles
ges this truth: 'What hast thou that thou hast
t received? And if thou hast received, why
st thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?'
ith reason, then, did the Psalmist of old ex-
im: 'O Lord, come to my assistance. O Lord,
ke haste to help me! I am needy and poor; O
d, help me! Thou art my helper; Thou art
deliverer. O Lord, make no delay.' But, when
ought to a consciousness of our nothingness,
can look up to the goodness of the Almighty
r assistance. 'I am needy and poor; O God,
sist me!'

"And, not only may we obtain this help im-
diately from God, but also, and still more
icaciously, through the mediation of those
o are nearer and dearer to Him than our-
ves.

"Of all our intercessors, Mary is the most
werful, the most willing, the most ready.
ising up, She went with haste' to render serv-
to her privileged cousin. The moment She sa-

luted Elizabeth, the latter was filled with th Holy Ghost, and the infant in her womb wa sanctified and jubilantly recognized Mary' presence, power and goodness.

"Are we not still more closely related t Mary? Are we not her children? Not only ar we favored with this honor by her Divine Son' appointment, but also because He has deigned t make us His brothers and sisters, members o His mystical body. 'He is the first-born amongs many brethren.' (Rom. viii, 29.) 'Know ye no that your bodies are the members of Christ? (I Cor. vi, 15.) Hence, Mary is styled, for all the Help of Christians, and in particular place she is honored as Our Lady of Good Help, Ou Lady of Perpetual Help, and, here, as Our Lady of Quick Help or Prompt Succor.

"The devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Suc cor is a timely one, as was remarked by you devoted Archbishop in a late pastoral on th subject. The Church is accused, by the thought less, as slow and behind the times. Her encour

agement of this devotion is a sufficient refutation of that groundless charge.

"We live in a time of rapid transit and communication. Steam and electricity have abridged, annihilated space and brought widely separated peoples into familiar intercourse. These earthly methods we feel instinctively inclined to adopt in our communication with Heaven. Not only do we wish to be heard, but to be speedily heard. Men grow impatient with delays, even from above; and, because they are not listened to at once, they are prone to give up asking. The devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Succor will remedy this evil and remove the excuse for not persevering in prayer.

"As we beseech God Himself to come to our assistance, and to make haste to help us, so we can also invoke Her whom He has appointed the channel of all favors to men to attend to us without delay, and to give us prompt succor. Only let us do so with a lively faith and a childlike confidence, and we shall experience, as so

many others have done before, that She is never invoked in vain.

"This devotion is peculiar to New Orleans, and, consequently, appropriate to its wants. Heavenly favors have their times and places. This is evident from the various sanctuaries throughout the world, whence celestial blessings are dispensed. Although God is present at all times and in all places, yet He has either selected or approved special ones in which to bestow His gifts. New Orleans is one of these chosen places, in which Mary wishes to be specially invoked and honored. For the religious who introduced this devotion promised to establish it here; and Mary, by making it possible to overcome the obstacles that lay in the way of Her wishes, has manifestly accepted the promise and already sealed it by favors. Just as she rose up and went in haste to help her cousin Elizabeth, so has she chosen New Orleans as the scene of Her ready assistance and the center whence this devotion is to radiate.

"It is an authorized devotion. The Holy Father has approved it, and expressly sanctioned this solemn and unique ceremony, the solemn crowning of this now famous statue, and the establishment of an archconfraternity under its auspices.

"There is, then, room to congratulate your zealous chief pastor and yourselves on this ominous occasion. Honor Mary, then, under this title; fervently invoke Her intercession and protection; avoid what would be displeasing to Her; practice what you know will please Her. Look up to Her as your Mother, and conduct yourselves as Her children. And you may fervidly trust that not only will She ever come to your succor, but also will do so promptly. Our Lady of Prompt Succor, hasten to assist us."

## CHAPTER IX.

### Our Lady of Prompt Succor—The Leader.

As the aim of this little volume is only to offer, with a general sketch of the pilgrimage, a rapid outline of the devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Succor, it does not come within its scope to record the various benefits and graces obtained at the shrine. Since, however, to dismiss it without an allusion to them would seem like ingratitude to Her who bestowed them, mention will be made further on, in a general way, of these favors and blessings. One of them, alone excepted, claims a special attention, a special study—the Victory of Chalmette—and of this we shall first speak.

This extraordinary victory, won by American arms, on January 8, 1815, has ever been attributed by Catholics to Our Lady of Prompt Succor. It came to gladden one of the darkest moments of our national existence, and came in answer to a vow that won Heaven to our side.

Since well-nigh a century, no year has been allowed to pass away without a public celebration and solemn high mass in gratitude for it. The day of the battle has been appointed by Holy Church to be the feast of the pilgrimage. And, as this event is, therefore, identified forever more with the history of the pilgrimage, a brief notice or study of it becomes natural, proper and necessary here.

In order to grasp fully the fact of Mary's intervention in behalf of the American cause, together with its meaning and its incalculable influence on the future history of the country, we must recall somewhat the circumstances and details of the event.

At the same time, in order that our belief in Her intervention may rest on a solid foundation and be free from all suspicion of partisan pleading, historical authorities of national standing will be invoked whenever and wherever possible. The consideration of three points will shed abundant light on the subject and remove all

shadow of doubt from every impartial mind.

First, the danger that threatened New Orleans was great and was real.

Secondly, the city was in a defenseless condition.

Thirdly, Mary came to the rescue.

First, the danger was great. History tells us that, after the Napoleonic wars, England's army, being disengaged elsewhere, was directed to proceed to America to wrest from the United States the Valley of the Mississippi, so largely and so lately hers; perhaps, too, in order to win for British arms a glory that was not theirs during the war in the Northeast.

New Orleans was the gateway of the great Valley, and must, therefore, fall first. As the means must be proportioned to the end, the vastness of the undertaking explains the vastness of the armament that proceeded against the city.

What was the strength of this army of invasion? The consensus of opinion among historians seems to put the forces sent to Louisiana,

from the beginning to the end of the campaign, at from fifteen to twenty thousand men. Parton, n his "Life of Jackson," when speaking of the inal review of this expedition afloat in Negril Bay, Jamaica, November 24, 1814, says: "Here vas a force of nearly 20,000 men, a fleet of fifty hips carrying a thousand guns and perfectly ppointed in every way, commanded by officers, ome of whom had grown gray in victory. * * * The élite of England's army and navy were float in Negril Bay on that bright day of November, when the last review took place."[1]

Such were the forces that were about to invade Louisiana. The danger, then, was not only eal, but was great, very great.

The next question that naturally arises is: "What resistance could New Orleans offer to his invasion?" Parton, where just quoted, goes n to say: "And this great armament was about o be directed against poor swamp-environed New Orleans, with its ragged, half-armed de-

[1] Life of A. Jackson, II, 39.

fenders floating down the Mississippi, or marching wearily along through the mire and flood of the Gulf shores, commanded by a general who had seen fourteen months' service and caught one glimpse of a civilized foe."

This much in general, but now for details.

Two points call for special notice: First, the army itself; and, secondly, its circumstances—that is, the local conditions at New Orleans.

The army and military defenses were, according to all authorities, in a deplorable state. Governor Claiborne, writing to General Jackson before his arrival in New Orleans, and urging him to hasten his visit there, says: "At this moment we are in a very unprepared and defenseless condition."[1] Sumner, in his "Life of Jackson," says: "On the second of December, 1814, Jackson reached New Orleans, where he expected the next blow to fall. Nothing had been done for the defense, and no supplies were there—not even arms."[2] With great difficulty, a few

1 Gayarre's History of Louisiana, IV, 341.
2 Life of A. Jackson, II, 38.

thousand men were gotten together for an army. How were they equipped? This may be inferred from a circular of Secretary Monroe, sent, in early December, to the Governors of Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky, in which he said: "Hasten your militia to New Orleans; do not wait for this Government to arm them; put all the arms you can find into their hands; let every man bring his rifle or musket with him."[1] This circular says much, but its silence says more. Parton, speaking of the utter destitution of the 2,250 Kentuckians on their arrival in New Orleans shortly before the battle, says: "And what was worse, because beyond remedy, not one man in ten was well armed, and only one man in three had any arms at all.[2]

It may be asked what use did Jackson make of the badly-armed men? "No alternative was presented," says his biographer, Eaton, "but to place them at his entrenchment in the rear,

1 Larned's History for Ready Reference, V, 335.
2 Life of A. Jackson, II, 168.

that by the show they might add to his appearance and numbers, without at all increasing his strength.''[1] Thus, as the crisis rapidly approached, Jackson found himself at the head of a few thousand men, some of whom were armed, some poorly armed, and some not armed at all.

However, an army often draws courage and the inspiration of triumph from its circumstances. What were, then, the local conditions at New Orleans? A forcible and quasi-official description of them may be found in the report to the Legislature, made by the Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, on November 22, 1814.[2] Walker, the historian, says that when the Legislature was convened by Gov. Claiborne, on October 5, 1814, it ''proceeded to business under most discouraging auspices. The members were divided into several factions. There was no union or harmony of action. Seeing their chiefs and leaders thus divided, the people grew

1 Life of A. Jackson, IX, 33.
2 Martin's History of Louisiana, XXX, 368.

alarmed, distrustful, despairing. They complained of the Legislature, the Legislature complained of the Governor, the Governor complained of both the Legislature and the people. There was neither money nor credit in the city. All kinds of arms and munitions of war were scarce. Indeed, never was a city so defenseless, so exposed, so weak, so prostrate, as New Orleans in the fall of 1814."[1] So true was this, and so well known even to the invaders themselves, and so sure were they, not only of victory, but even of little or no resistance, that on board ship accompanying the fleet were the future collector of the port, already appointed, and a full staff of civil officials sent to administer the government of the conquered province.

Whence was salvation to come? From a human point of view, there was little hope of successful resistance. From a supernatural point of view, hope was abounding; for there remained the Christian faith, and, behind it, the power of Heaven.

1 Jackson and New Orleans, IV, 71.

Fortunately, at this juncture, appeared upon the scene one of those men whom Providence prepares for great emergencies, the administrator of the Diocese of Louisiana, the Very Reverend Wm. Dubourg. In the course of coming years, he was to preside successively as bishop or archbishop over this diocese and over the ancient and illustrious sees of Montauban and Besancon, in France.

Amid the stirring events and impending perils of the moment, his voice was not silent, but made itself heard in strong and eloquent appeals to his people to do their part valiantly in the struggle before them. Better than this, the holy priest, true to his love for the Blessed Mother of God, urged all to have recourse to Her who had given triumph to so many a lost cause. The faithful hearkened to his fervent appeal.

And, according as matters hastened on to a crisis, recourse to Mary multiplied itself. All eyes were fixed on that Star of Hope. All feet

daily hurried to St. Mary's ancient chapel. Here, the unwearied Christian heart poured forth its constant sigh of supplication. Here, from breaking dawn till darkening eve, the anxious crowds appealed to Her pitying heart to be the city's guard, defense and shield. While fathers, brothers, husbands, sought the distant fields of combat, mothers, sisters, wives, sought Mary's altar and Mary's aid. Nor did She fail them. That a special supernatural power hovered over the city there seemed to be little room to doubt. It was evident in its immediate, as well as later, effects; in the buoyant hope that, in darksome days, lit up every countenance; in the stern resolve that steeled every will; in the prudent counsel and wise plans of the commander-in-chief. So that, if true, as some thought, that Jackson was unequal to his task and unfit for the emergency, Heaven seemed precisely for that reason to have made of him its vessel of election to carry out its merciful designs.

Unmistakable signs revealed the rapid ap-

proach of the hour of the supreme struggle. Historians differ somewhat in their statistical estimates of the contending forces; still, the general drift of opinion among them is that, while on the British side there were about 15,000 men ready to take part in the battle, only about six or eight thousand actually did so. On the American side, there were about 6,000 militiamen in or around the city. But, for one reason or another, only 3,200 of them were on the battlefield of Chalmette on the 8th of January. The historian, Gayarré, speaking of the eve of the battle, says: "Our lines were defended by 3,200 men. In front of this small body of militia and of a line of defense, which would have elicited a smile of contempt from a European military-man, were drawn up from fourteen to fifteen thousand of the best troops of England, supported by a powerful artillery."[1]

Unequal, indeed, seemed the contest! However, on the side of weakness was a power of

[1] History of Louisiana, IV, 466.

which historians speak not—She, whom Scripture compares to "an army in battle array." At last, Sunday, January 8, 1815, dawned—the day decisive of the city's fate. And while the early roar of artillery announced the terrible beginning of the struggle, the faithful were gathered at St. Mary's Chapel, eagerly praying for victory. Here, during the combat, the venerable Statue of Our Lady of Prompt Succor was placed upon the altar and the holy sacrifice of the mass was offered up by the Vicar Apostolic, the Very Rev. W. Dubourg.

The devoted religious of St. Ursula, ardent in their patriotism as in their faith, in order to secure success for the American arms, had recourse to a means that Catholic peoples have, in all ages, employed to gain Heaven's aid in great emergencies. They made a vow. And in this vow they solemnly pledged and promised Our Lady of Prompt Succor that, should the Americans win the victory, on each recurring 8th of January, forevermore, a solemn high

mass would be offered up in her honor in thanksgiving for the triumph.

This extraordinary vow was, at once, symbolic, solemn and significant. It was symbolic of the usage of all Christian ages and peoples, that so often took this means to win Heaven to their side. It was solemn, in that its binding force was laid on succeeding generations in perpetuity. It was significant, in that it involved the awful sacrifice of the new law, and the mystical shedding, through coming centuries, of a Divine Blood that never flowed in vain. Thus, was the God of Armies propitiated; thus, was won to the defense and protection of the city that Ark of the Covenant that has never known defeat. This vow was agreeable in Mary's sight, was accepted by Her, and its fruit was—VICTORY!

A few words seem necessary and sufficient to tell the wonderful and oft-told story of the combat. In a council of war, held by the British commanders on the eve of the battle, it was de-

cided to storm the American lines on the morning of January 8th. In keeping with this decision, on the following day, as soon as the fog rolled away, the main body of the invading force advanced to the attack. However, they found their foes awaiting them. The storming columns were met with such a steady, terrific fire from the American lines that they were thrown into utter confusion. Then followed a disorder, slaughter, rout, of such a nature and such a magnitude that natural causes alone cannot account for the disaster.

In twenty-five minutes, incredible though it may seem, twenty-five hundred of these brave men were dead, wounded or prisoners on the field. "They fell," says an English writer, "like the very blades of grass beneath the scythe of the mower. Seventeen hundred and eighty-one victims, including three generals, seven colonels and seventy-five lesser officers, were the harvest of these few minutes." And yet, only the two extremities of the American army—about one-

half the force on the field—took part in the battle, the center of it remaining inactive. Their loss, astonishing to say, did not exceed thirteen—seven killed and six wounded. Lambert, the only remaining general officer on the British side, having buried his dead, under a flag of truce, retreated under cover of the night. With this battle ended the invasion of Louisiana.

The historian, in presence of such an astounding event, naturally asks himself: What can have been the real cause that gave such an issue to the combat? Was it that the Americans proved, after all, to be extraordinary soldiers? They were mere militiamen, and, hence, not soldiers at all in the ordinary sense or acceptation of the term. Were they extraordinary marksmen? They were. But the British, too, who met them in conflict, were masters in the art of war. Parton says: "The greater part of Gen. Keane's army were fresh from the fields of the Peninsula, and had been led by victorious Wellington into France, to behold and share in that final

triumph of British arms."[1] And again: "Indeed, there was not a regiment of those which had come from England to form this army which had not won brilliant distinction in strongly-contested fields."

Thus, then, do we see once more verified the words of the heroic Judas Machabeus, that success in war depends not on the number and valor of soldiers in an army, but upon the power and decision of Heaven. To this inglorious ending came the invasion of Louisiana.

And England's soldiery, as splendid as the world has seen, and the superb armament that dreamed so little of defeat, came to grief, not simply and solely, as some say, at the hands of human skill and bravery, that at best are Heaven's instruments, but before that Ark of the Covenant that has never known defeat, never aided in vain a lost cause, never forsaken the fortunes of the people of God.

True, Mary dispatched no angel, nor did She

1 Life of A. Jackson, II, 37.

vouchsafe, as was done on the occasion of the Battle of Lepanto, a heavenly vision to tell that She bestowed victory on Jackson's little host. Heaven does not send a messenger to announce each time that it hears our prayers. But, as Christ once intimated to His hearers, there are things so evident to the man of intelligence that he has only to open his eyes and see. The cause of the victory of Chalmette is one of these.

## CHAPTER X.

### Our Lady of Prompt Succor the Victor.

In a eulogy on Jackson, delivered shortly after the hero's death by Ex-Attorney General of the United States, B. Franklin Butler, of New York, the speaker used these striking words:

"In his command at New Orleans, from his arrival at the beleaguered city until his departure from it, we seem to follow some Heaven-appointed and Heaven-assisted warrior of the ancient dispensation rather than a chieftain of modern times. Such superhuman activity, such assumption and exercise of power, such chivalrous daring and consummate address in striking the first blow in the unequal conflict, such cautious preparations for the final struggle, such perfect success in its triumphant issue, such frightful havoc in the troops of the enemy, and such almost miraculous preservation of his own—who, in these things, does not see the hand

of God, the agency of an instrument ordained, prepared and guided by Himself?"[1]

An unusual presence of the supernatural seems to have been evident to whoever had the faith to see.

Nor was there ground for Catholics to wonder at this. Did they not appeal to Our Lady of Prompt Succor to come to the rescue? Hearkening to the prayers and vows of Her clients, Mary came with "prompt succor," and Her mysterious influence was present throughout the contest, inspiriting and guarding the cause of the weak and preparing the way for victory.

In the Battle of New Orleans, the first thing that brings into evidence the intervention of a supernatural power is the great disproportion of opposing forces and resources. All historians of the event insist on this disparity. In the previous chapter, we have dwelt on the power and resources of the invasion. Eaton, in his biogra-

1 Eulogies on A. Jackson, compiled by B. M. Dusenberg, 1846.

phy of Jackson, thus describes the weakness of the resistance:

"Never, perhaps, all the circumstances considered, did any general advance to the defense and protection of a people situated in his own country where greater room was had to distrust the success of the event and believe all efforts useless."[1]

This was surely an almost desperate condition of affairs. And still, when, with tremendous effort, a small army of 3,200 men were brought together on the field of Chalmette, on the 8th of January, to face the invading host, even this band of 3,200 men was too large by one-half; for all historians remind us that the center of the American army had no part in the fight, but only the two extremities. So that Heaven, in order that its intervention might be apparent to all, seemed to set aside one-half of Jackson's little band of 3,200 men, and, in reality, won the victory with the other insignificant half.

1 Eaton's Life of A. Jackson, VIII, 276.

This intervention in behalf of the Americans made itself felt all around in various ways. At one time, it manifested itself in the extraordinary doubt and confusion that marked the counsels of the enemy; or, again, in the singular prudence, fortitude and general success that were conspicuous in the defense, despite its great unpreparedness; or, in fine, in the prodigious disproportion of losses, between the two sides, in the fight.

M. Latour, the French writer, witness and participator in the event, considering the difficulties in the way of the British, says, in speaking of this battle in his memoir:

"The duty of impartiality, incumbent on him who relates military events, obliges me to observe that the attack made on Jackson's lines by the British, on the 8th of January, must have been determined on by their generals without any consideration of the ground, the weather or the difficulties to be surmounted," etc.

Sumner, in his "Life of A. Jackson," failing to see a heavenly influence at work, is, of course, lost in bewilderment at the strange developments that occurred in the course of the struggle. He says:

"The story of the battle which took place is a strange one. Everything fell out favorably for Jackson, as if by magic. The English lost their way, fired into each other, adopted foolish rumors, disobeyed orders, neglected precautions. The two parties built redoubts out of the same mud, and cannonaded each other all day through a dense smoke. At night, the American works were hardly damaged, while the English works were battered to pieces and the cannon dismounted."[1]

The effect of a supernatural presence and aid was made evident, not only in a negative way, by frustrating the plans of the invasion, but also in a most positive way, by a crushing defeat of the invaders.

1 Life of A. Jackson, II, 39.

This friendly and striking favor of Heaven did not escape the vigilant eye of Jackson. Not being a Catholic, he did not discover or grasp the precise source or manner of this assistance—namely, Our Lady of Prompt Succor—but, with a general and lively faith in God, he could not help feeling and acknowledging the aid of a supernatural presence. This he declared over and over again. Could this fact be put in more striking and vivid language than that in which he expressed it when, shortly after the battle, writing to Gov. Blount, of Tennessee, he said, in speaking of the conflict:

"The unerring hand of Providence shielded my men from the showers of balls, bombs and rockets; when, on the other hand, it appeared that every ball and bomb from our lines was charged with the mission of death."[1]

This extraordinary aid from above appeared, too, in the fearful swiftness and terrible dispatch with which the battle was prosecuted, as

1 Parton's Life of A. Jacksno, II, 269.

well as in the astounding disparity of losses between the two sides. Latour, already cited, says that the battle proper, at which he was present, was over in twenty-five minutes, although cannonading, by both sides, was carried on for a while longer.

Captain Cooke, quoted by Parton, who was, on the English side, a witness and participator in the battle, says in his memoirs:

"The fire of the Americans from behind the barricades had been most murderous, and had caused so sudden a repulse that it was difficult to persuade ourselves that such an event had happened—the whole affair being more like a dream or some scene of enchantment than reality."[1] "Like a dream, indeed," adds Parton; how long a time, does the reader think, elapsed between the fire of the first American gun and the total rout of the attacking columns? Twenty-five minutes! The scene behind the American works during the fire can be easily

1 Life of A. Jackson, II, 206.

imagined; one-half of the army never fired a shot. The battle was fought at the two extremities of the lines."

Such was the extraordinary conclusion of this most singular conflict—so extraordinary, indeed, that the historian Gayarré, in relating the event, invokes the testimony of Jackson himself, in order to establish the fact beyond all question. "As to our casualties in this battle," says the writer, "amounting to thirteen killed and wounded, a number which seems almost fabulous when compared to the well-ascertained loss of at least 2,600 sustained by the enemy, General Jackson, in his communication to the Secretary of War, remarks: 'Such a disproportion, when we consider the number and the kind of troops engaged, must, I know, excite astonishment and may not everywhere be fully credited; yet, I am perfectly satisfied that the account is not exaggerated on the one part, nor underrated on the other.' "[1]

Strange to say, of all the testimonies that go

1 Gayarre's History of Louisiana, IV, 476.

to prove the supernatural character of the victory of Chalmette, no one, perhaps, surpasses or equals in force that of General Jackson himself. Though not a Catholic, he had a strong Christian faith in God; and history shows that, on the whole, despite his stormy career, the harsh circumstances in which his hard lot was cast, and the rude education that adversity imparted to him, his was naturally a noble heart and a religious soul.

He knew that countless prayers had been offered in the city for his success. No one better than he knew the deplorable state of military affairs at New Orleans; and, if the situation was saved, he felt that an agency above human must have come to the rescue. Eaton, in his "Life of Jackson," speaking of his return to the city after the battle, notes this fact, and says:

"All greeted his return and hailed him as their deliverer. But, amid the expressions of thanks and honors and congratulations heaped upon him, he was not unmindful that, to an

energy above his own and to a wisdom which controls the destiny of nations, he was indebted for the glorious triumph of his arms.

"Relieved from the arduous duties of the field, his first concern was to draw the minds of all in thankfulness and adoration to that sovereign Mercy without whose aid and inspiring counsel vain are all earthly efforts."[1]

His conviction in this matter appeared after the battle, especially on two occasions; once, when he visited the Ursuline Convent; and, again, when he requested the ecclesiastical authorities to set aside a special day for solemn thanks, in which a public expression of gratitude to Heaven might take place.

Shortly after the battle, led, perhaps, by inspiration, as though to acknowledge the real source of triumph, and accompanied by his staff, he proceeded to the Convent of the Ursuline Nuns, to express to these holy religious his thanks for the prayers they had offered for the

1 Life of A. Jackson, XI, 368.

+ WM. V. DUBOURG,
BISHOP OF NEW ORLEANS.

success of his campaign. Nor were future years to efface this sentiment of gratitude from his heart; for, long afterwards, when, as ex-President of the United States, he came to New Orleans, he did not fail to pay the good nuns once more a visit, in which he recalled the stormy days of yore and the service their pious intercession with Heaven had rendered the cause.

However, Jackson was not a man to be satisfied with this tame and quiet acknowledgment of so great a favor. For a gift so extraordinary, and to him so evident, he desired there should be a public and proportionate expression of gratitude. We see his whole mind on the subject in the following ringing letter which he wrote to the Very Reverend Vicar Apostolic, Dr. Dubourg, who then administered the Diocese of Louisiana:

"Reverend Sir:

"The signal interposition of Heaven, in giving success to our arms against the enemy who so lately landed on our shores, * * * while

it must excite in every bosom attached to the happy government under which we live emotions of the liveliest gratitude, requires, at the same time, some external manifestation of these feelings. Permit me, therefore, to entreat that you will cause the service of public thanksgiving to be performed in the cathedral, in token of the great assistance we have received from the Ruler of All Events and our humble sense of it."

This letter, remarkable from many points of view, is especially so in that it puts beyond question Jackson's conviction and testimony that, to his mind, the victory was due to a supernatural assistance or cause. It is a document of a most serious nature, written in most serious circumstances, and for a most serious purpose.

Let us analyze the letter: From it flow several evident conclusions. First, a supernatural cause intervened in behalf of the Americans. Secondly, this interposition was signal; that is, not common, but extraordinary. Thirdly, the expression, "in giving success to our arms," evidently means

that this heavenly interposition gave the victory. Fourthly, this is a fact great, evident and public, that naturally calls for a proportionately great, external, public manifestation of gratitude.

The celebration, so appropriately and religiously suggested by General Jackson, took place on January 23d, fifteen days after the battle. It was planned on a grand scale and executed in a most elaborate manner, partly in the old cathedral itself and partly in front of the sacred edifice, in the historic square that now bears the hero's name. At the door of the church he was met by the clergy and the Very Reverend Vicar Apostolic, Dr. Dubourg, who addressed him in a brief and most eloquent discourse. In the expression, style, tone and whole tenor of this address nothing is more evident than that the General as well as the speaker and his audience were of one mind—that the "signal interposition of Heaven" gave the victory.

On this extraordinary occasion, therefore, was

the fact of supernatural intervention in behalf of the Americans announced to the world by all the voices of report. It was acknowledged, and there solemnly proclaimed, by the presence and participation in the ceremony of prelate, priests, people and leader. And thus did Mary triumph.

In the trying days of Jackson's campaign in Louisiana there was one who rendered him noble service as aide-de-camp and as private secretary—namely, Edward Livingstone, whom the world acknowledges to-day as one of America's greatest jurists. Many years after the battle (Parton relates), Mr. Livingstone, then a Senator in Congress from Louisiana, said in a speech delivered on the 8th of January:

"In the City of New Orleans is a convent in which a number of estimable ladies have dedicated their lives to the practice of piety, to the education of poor children of their own sex, and to works of charity. This pious sisterhood were awakened from their rest, or disturbed in their holy vigils, before the dawn of the 8th of

January, by the roar of cannon and the volleys of musketry. The calendar, which pointed out the prayers of the day, was hastily opened and indicated the auspicious name of St. Victoria. They hailed the omen, and, prostrate on the pavement which holy knees had worn, implored the God of Battles to nerve the arm of their protectors and turn the tide of combat against the invaders of their country.

"Their prayers were heard. And, while they daily offer up their thanks to that Power to whose aid they ascribed their deliverance, they have not been unmindful of him who was chosen as the instrument to effect it."[1]

In this narrative of the great Livingstone, his allusion to St. Victoria proves that, like many another prophet, he spoke better than he knew. For, in Heaven's designs, the 8th of January was to be indeed the chosen day and appointed feast of Her who, as Mother of God, was the true Victoria; the one who, as announced in the

1 Parton's Life of A. Jackson, II, 228.

ancient bowers of Eden, would secure to the world its triumph over the powers of evil; and whom, for all reasons, all Christian ages have hailed as "Our Lady of Victory."

History relates that, on the banks of the beautiful Saguenay River, in Canada, looms up a magnificent cliff, upon which stands a votive oratory of the Blessed Virgin. This memorial bears witness to the great mercy of Her who, near this spot, rescued from destruction a vessel and its passengers that were on the point of perishing. Hence, in memory of that event, every vessel that now passes by the spot salutes with a triple discharge of cannon, as with a hymn of gratitude, Her who here displayed at once Her power and goodness.

Thus, too, in coming days, here in our own Louisiana, upon these storied shores, beside her famous battlefield, will rise in honor of Our Lady of Prompt Succor a glorious basilica worthy of Her name. It will proclaim to all the magnificence of Her mercies. It will speak to all

of Her guardian love for those who, in weal and woe, put their trust in Her. It will relate in deathless eloquence, to the now unborn generations, the marvelous story of how this our Ark of the Covenant triumphed on the field of Chalmette. And the unnumbered fleets of earth, visiting this world metropolis, will, incoming and outgoing, greet with jubilee of cannon voices Her who, in its hour of woe, rescued from ruin the city of Her love.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WONDERWORKER—CONCLUSION.

There are, in the world around us, persons who, despite the evidence of countless facts, pretend that pilgrimages are a thing of the past, and that in our day of enlightenment, with its matter-of-fact society, the miraculous intervention of old has no longer a place. Wherever the faith is weak and its spirit not dominant, thoughts of the kind prevail in the minds of so-called Christians.

However, the age of miracles is not over, and the communion of saints is not over, and the efficacy of prayer is not over. The almighty power of God is to-day as active as ever, and the mercies of Mary as frequent as ever, and the Catholic religion as miraculous as ever. To the timid ones of Christ's flock, whose faith is weak because ignorant, and who tremble at the name of "miracle," the following words of Cardinal Newman might be addressed:

"Catholics hold the mystery of the Incarnation—and the Incarnation is the most stupendous event which ever can take place on earth; and after it, and henceforth, I do not see how we can scruple at any miracle on the mere ground of its being unlikely to happen. No miracle can be so great as that which took place in the holy house of Nazareth. It is infinitely more difficult to believe than all the miracles of the Breviary, of the Martyrology, of saints' lives, of legends, of local traditions, put together; and there is the greatest inconsistency on the very face of the matter for anyone so to strain out the gnat and to swallow the camel, as to profess what is inconceivable, yet to protest against what is surely within the limits of intelligible hypothesis."

Elsewhere, the same eminent writer reminds us that "the Catholic Church, from east to west, from north to south, is, according to our conceptions, hung with miracles." And, in fine, he tells us that "there are two systems going on in

the world—one of nature and one above nature; and two histories—one of common events and one of miracles; and each system and each history has its own order."[1]

In the history of Catholic devotions, as in the history of men's lives, the test of Heaven's approval is to be found in the bestowal or number of its favors.

From the day on which occurred, in the year 1812, the marvelous intervention of Our Lady of Prompt Succor to rescue from conflagration and destruction the Ursuline Convent of New Orleans, till this day—now verging on one hundred years—there has been neither pause nor rest in the unwearying stream of Mary's benefits. This quiet, heavenly stream of riches has pursued its silent way, through all the long years, with blessings for all, whether saints or sinners. Amid the sin and din of earth it has gone noiselessly on, nor stopped because of ingratitude or because of forgetfulness on the part of men.

1 The Present Position of Catholics in England, Lecture VII.

They asked of Mary favors temporal, and the favors came. They asked of Mary favors spiritual, and the favors came. This was, of course, as it should be, since it illustrated at once the comforting truth that Mary, Mother of God, is likewise Mother of men, and the great fact that She is, in all emergencies, Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

This shrine of Our Lady of Prompt Succor has not as yet, indeed, attained the celebrity of many a famous pilgrimage elsewhere; and the pages of its records do not show a relation of uninterrupted prodigies. It has, however, in great measure and in its own appointed way, done its great work. In the accomplishment of its own peculiar and providential mission it has proven a source of abundant and continuous benefits and blessings to the faithful. Were it possible to furnish here a list of the favors granted by Our Lady of Prompt Succor within the last one hundred years, we should be amazed to see how generous She has been in dealing with us.

What is not possible within the narrow limits of the present brief historical sketch will, let us hope, be found possible at some future day. And, for the glory of our great benefactress, there will then, we trust, be given to the public an extended account of many of the blessings that have come to countless souls through this devotion. Many of these graces and favors are, indeed, already known to the public, for numbers of them have, in the long course of years, found their way into the Catholic press, which has scattered the glad tidings of them broadcast over the land. At the same time, and with them, it has scattered and spread love for the devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Succor. In this manner has the devotion traveled up and down the land—from north to south, and from east to west, leaving everywhere unmeasured benefits to mark its heavenly passage.

Often, knowledge of these graces has reached the public only through the countless voices of rumor and report. For Mary has been prodigal

of Her benefits to the true and tried of God's faithful even when, as She foresaw, timidity or reserve would be silent, or slow to make them known.

Then, again, numbers of Her blessings, never published, are registered in the archives of the pilgrimage, where they may be found preserved in their simplicity of language and statement without other comment or claim or recommendation than the names of the worthy Christians who, through a sentiment of duty and of gratitude, reported them by letter.

In fine, as is natural, great numbers, or, rather, the immense majority, of the benefits of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, especially the secret and silent favors of the supernatural order, are inscribed and registered in the grateful hearts and unforgetting memories of Her clients.

In this century-long record of benedictions, all the ills and ailments of men seem to be remembered by Our Lady of Prompt Succor. Hardly a human disease, affliction or ordeal but has won,

from Her, healing or mercy. In this great list of Her mercies, besides business successes and help of every variety in the financial line, there are to be found cures of every sort—cures of consumption, Bright's disease, appendicitis, diphtheria, epilepsy, insanity, meningitis, paralysis, blindness, blood-cancer, fevers, accidents, etc. Add to these the ending of strikes, the extinguishing of conflagrations, the reform of drunkards, the winning of lawsuits, the success of students in their studies, etc. Indeed, from over the length and breadth of the land—from Canada to the Gulf—have come the glad tidings of these mercies of Mary.

How generous and numerous these blessings have sometimes been, on given occasions, might be instanced by a correspondence of the parish priest of Tacuba, a town outside the City of Mexico. He writes that, within three months after the erection, in his parish, of a shrine of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, as many as sixty ex-votos were brought to him by the faithful, as

expressions of gratitude for favors received.

On the other hand, how great and extraordinary these benefits have sometimes been might be illustrated by many facts. Within the limits of this little volume, which cannot dwell in detail on these instances, it will be enough to recall the case of Right Reverend T. Meerschaert, Bishop of Oklahoma and Indian Territory, whose wonderful cure, here in New Orleans, at the Hotel Dieu, is still fresh in the memory of all.

Bright's disease had reduced him to such an extremity that five physicians declared that, in their judgment, he could not survive more than a few days. A novena was at once begun to Our Lady of Prompt Succor for his recovery, and the cure occurred before the novena was finished. Writing recently to the Superior of the Ursuline Convent in New Orleans of his wonderful restoration to health, wrought by Our Lady of Prompt Succor, this apostle of Mary says:

"More than nine years have now elapsed since

the time when the doctors gave me 'eight more days to live,' and, yet, I can stand as much fatigue and work to-day as several of my young priests. Since that time, I love to go yearly to New Orleans to say a mass of thanksgiving, in the Ursuline Chapel, at the altar of the miraculous statue. Faithful to the promise I then made, I each day say a beads of thanksgiving, and in order to obtain that, in case such be God's will, my health may be enduring. And I am convinced that, when at last the great summons comes for me to depart for Heaven, it will not be my ailment of old that will bring me to the feet of Our Lord and of His Blessed Mother."

## CONCLUSION.

Half a century has come and gone since that eventful day when Mary's glorious privilege of Her Immaculate Conception was proclaimed among men; and as this memorable period now closes, and with it vanish from the scene the name and figure of many a holy man and woman

who, in our midst, gave glory to Mary, we pause to ask ourselves, on the threshold of a new period: What remains to be done by Her clients still here, in order to fill up the measure of Her glory? What especially remains to be done by us, of this day and place, for Her who has done so much for us?

Much, indeed, has She loved New Orleans. But, in naught has She shown that love more than in coming to reign and rule here as Our Lady of Prompt Succor, and to assert, in this marked manner, Her heavenly sway over our hearts, our souls and our lives. Divine Providence, in whose eternal designs it was that Her pilgrimage should be here, and here should be a center of benedictions for the world around, certainly favored this above most cities. *"Non fecit taliter omni nationi."* "He has not shown such love for every people."

Since well-nigh one hundred years, here has She fixed Her abode—here, in our midst, this Mother of Divine Grace, this Seat of Wisdom,

this Cause of Our Joy. From Her wonderful little chapel, seated on the lone shores of the Mississippi, has She dispensed incessantly Her blessings to all, few or many, who came for them. There, countless desolate souls and broken hearts, in the years that are over, found the comfort, the courage, the light, the strength, the joy, the success, of which life seemed void.

And what has been our gratitude in return? How many among us have lifted up their voices to proclaim these blessings, to tell the praises of the pilgrimage, to spread its devotion? Yet, who of us will say that this rich source of salvation and of sanctification, in its long period of existence in our midst, has, as much as it might have done, bestowed of its heavenly abundance on the hungering and thirsting multitudes? What of the blessings that, from this pilgrimage, should overflow the land, like so many goodly streams from a generous fountainhead?

In keeping, then, with the ways of Providence and with the history of every Catholic de-

votion, it calls for apostles to reveal its virtues, to open the eyes of the ignorant and the hearts of the indifferent to its saving graces.

This is the duty that appeals to-day to Mary's clients—the duty of apostleship in behalf of this devotion. Nor will it lessen this zeal of theirs to bear in mind that, a few years hence, in 1910, will occur the hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the shrine—whose blessings and benefits were one day so generously to enrich them.

Is it too early to press into its service all possible resources, and to prepare for it a triumph such as it deserves, and for Mary Herself such a tribute of glory as is Her due here?

Meantime, what She especially asks, and what, above all else, She expects, is increase of this devotion in our own hearts and in those of others. "For with it comes every good."

As it has ever been, so will it ever be, that peoples, like individuals, will find JESUS with Her, and with Him will find life eternal. And

thus it is that She triumphs with Him and through Him, with us and for us. And hence, in a far higher sense than Her people of old hailed Judith, do we, in their words, greet Mary: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people."

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